THE RIGHT METHOD For a ſetled PEACE OF CONSCIENCE And Spiritual COMFORT.

Tanner 488

In XXXII DIRECTIONS.

Written for the uſe of a troubled Friend: And now Publiſhed

By *Richard Baxter*, Teacher of the Church at *Kederminſter* in Worceſterſhire.

The Fourth Edition, Corrected and Augmented.

1 Joh. 4. 16. *God is Love.*
Luk. 14. 17. Mat. 22. 4. *Come, for all things are now Ready.*

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Thom. Tanner

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

MAT. 11. 28.

COme unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Reſt : *Take my* Yoke *upon you, and* Learn *of me: for I am* meek *and* Lowly in heart, *and ye ſhall find* Reſt *unto your ſouls: For my* Yoke *is eaſie, and my burthen is light.*

GAL. 5. 17.

For the fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the fleſh; and theſe are contrary the one to the other, ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

ROM. 6. 16.

Know ye not that to whom ye Yield *your ſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey? whether of ſin unto Death, or of* Obedience unto Righteouſneſs?

ROM. 13. 14.

Make not proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfill the luſts thereof.

ROM. 8. 13.

For if ye Live after the fleſh, ye ſhall dye: But if ye through the Spirit do mortifie the deeds of the Body, ye ſhall live.

2 Pet. 2. 19.

While they promiſe them Liberty, *they themſelves are the Servants of Corruption, for of whom a man is overcome, of the ſame is he brought in bondage.*

Ezek. 33. 10, 11.

Thus you ſpeak, ſaying, If our tranſgreſſions and our ſins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how ſhould we then live? *Say unto them,* As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil wayes; for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?

2 Cor. 2. 20.

Now then, we are Ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us: we pray you in Chriſts ſtead, be reconciled to God.

Psal. 37. 3, 4.

Truſt in the Lord, and do good, &c. *Delight thy ſelf alſo in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee the Deſires of thine heart.*

Sound Doctrine makes a ſound Judgement, a ſound Heart, a ſound Converſation, and a ſound Conſcience.

To

To my much valued, beloved, and Honoured friends, Col. *John Bridges*, with Mr *Margaret Bridges* his Wife, and Mr *Thomas Foley*, with Mrs *Anne Foley* his Wife.

THough in publiſhing our Writings, we intend them for the good of all; yet cuſtom (not without reaſon) doth teach us, ſometimes to direct them more eſpecially to ſome. Though one only had the original intereſt in theſe Papers, yet do I now direct them to you all, as not knowing how in this to ſeparate you. You dwell together in my Eſtimation and Affection: One of you a Member of the Church, which I muſt Teach; and legally the Patron of its Maintenance and Miniſter: The other, a ſpecial branch of that family, which I was firſt indebted to in this County. You lately joyned in preſenting to the Parliament, the Petition of this County for the Goſpel and a faithful Mi-

niſtry : When I only told you of my intention, of ſending ſome poor Scholars to the Univerſity, you freely and joyntly offered your conſiderable Annual allowance thereto, and that for the continuance of my life, or their neceſſities there. I will tell the world of this, whether you will or no : not for your applauſe, but for their imitation ; and the ſhame of many of far greater eſtates, that will not be drawn to do the like. The ſeaſon ſomewhat aggravates the Goodneſs of your Works. When Satan hath a deſign to burn up thoſe Nurſeries, you are watering Gods plants : when the greedy mouth of Sacriledge is gaping for their Maintenance, you are voluntarily adding for the ſupply of its defect. Who knows how many ſouls they may win to Chriſt (if God ſhall ſend them forth into his harveſt) whom you have thus aſſiſted ? and what an addition to your comfort this may be ? When the Goſpel is ſo undermined, and the Miniſtry ſo maligned, and their maintenance ſo envyed, you have, as the mouth of this County, appeared for them all. What God will yet do with us, we cannot tell ; but if he will continue his Goſpel to us, you may have the greater comfort in it ; If he will remove it, and forſake a proud, unworthy,

unworthy, falſe hearted People; yet may you have the comfort of your ſincere endeavours: you (with the reſt that ſincerely furthered it) may eſcape the gnawings of Conſcience, and the publique curſe and reproach, which the Hiſtory of this Age may faſten upon them, who after all their Engagements in blood and Covenants, would either in ignorant fury, or malicious ſubtilty, or baſe temporizing cowardize, oppugn or undermine the Goſpel, or in perfidious ſilence, look on, whileſt it's deſtroyed. But becauſe it is not the work of a flatterer, that I am doing, but of a friend; I muſt ſecond theſe commendations with ſome caution and counſel; and tell your ſelves of your danger and duty, as I tell others of your exemplary Deeds. Truly the ſad experiences of theſe times, have much abaſed my confidence in man, and cauſed me to have lower thoughts of the beſt, than ſometime I have had. I confeſs I look on man, as ſuch a diſtempered, ſlippery and unconſtant thing, and of ſuch a natural mutability of Apprehenſions and Affections, that as I ſhall never more call any man on earth, My friend, but with a ſuppoſition that he may poſſibly become mine enemy; So I ſhall never be ſo confident of any

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mans Fidelity to Chriſt, as not withall to ſuſpect that he may poſſibly forſake him: nor ſhall I boaſt of any mans ſervice for the Goſpel, but with a jealouſie that he may be drawn to do as much againſt it (though God, who knows the heart, and knows his own decrees, may know his ſincerity, and foreknow his perſeverance.) Let me therefore remember you, that had you expended your whole eſtates, and the blood of your hearts for Chriſt and his Goſpel, he will not take himſelf beholden to you. He oweth you no Thanks for your deepeſt Engagements, higheſt adventures, greateſt coſt, or utmoſt endeavours. You are ſure beforehand that you ſhall be no loſers by him: your ſeeming hazards increaſe your ſecurity: Your loſſes are your gain; your giving is your receiving; your expences are your revenues: Chriſt returns the largeſt uſury. The more you do and ſuffer for him, the more you are beholden to him. I muſt alſo remember you, that you may poſſibly live to ſee the day, when it will coſt you dearer to ſhew your ſelves faithful to the Goſpel, Ordinances and Miniſters of Chriſt, then now it doth: and that many have ſhrunk in greater tryals, that paſt through leſſer with reſolution and honour. Your de-

ſection at the laſt, would be the loſs of all your works and hopes. *If any man draw back*, Chriſt ſaith, *his ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.* Even thoſe that have endured the great fight of Affliction, being reproached and made a gazing-ſtock, and that have taken joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, in aſſurance of a better and enduring ſubſtance, have yet need to be warned that they caſt not away their confidence, and draw not back to perdition, and loſe not the Reward for want of Patience and Perſeverance, *Heb.* 10. 22. to the end. That you may eſcape this danger and be happy for ever, take this advice. 1. Look carefully to the ſincerity of your hearts, in the Covenant-cloſure with Chriſt, See that you take him with the happineſs he hath promiſed for your *All.* Take heed of looking after another felicity; or cheriſhing other Hopes; or eſteeming too highly any thing below. Be jealous, and very jealous, leſt your hearts ſhould cloſe deceitfully with Chriſt, maintaining any ſecret Reſerve for your bodily ſafety: either reſolving not to follow him, or not reſolving to follow him through the moſt deſolate diſtreſſed condition that he ſhall lead you in. Count what it may coſt you to get the Crown;

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ſtudy well his precepts of Mortification and Self-denyal. There is no true hopes of the Glory to come, if you cannot caſt over-board all worldly hopes, when the ſtorm is ſuch that you muſt hazard the one. O how many have thought that Chriſt was moſt dear to them, and that the hopes of heaven were their chiefeſt hopes, who have left Chriſt, though with ſorrow, when he bid them let go all? 2. Every day renew your apprehenſions of the Truth and Worth of the Promiſed Felicity; and of the Deluſory Vanity of all things here below: Let not Heaven loſe with you its Attractive force, through your forgetfulneſs or unbelief. He is the beſt Chriſtian, that knows beſt why he is a Chriſtian; and he will moſt faithfully ſeek and ſuffer, that beſt knows for what he doth it. Value not Wealth and Honour above that rate which the wiſeſt and beſt experienced have put upon them: and allow them no more of your affections than they deſerve. A mean wit may eaſily diſcover their emptineſs. Look on all preſent actions and conditions with a remembrance of their end. Deſire not a ſhare in their proſperity, who muſt pay as dear for it as the loſs of their ſouls: Be not ambitious of that honour which muſt end in Confuſion; nor of the

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Favour of thoſe that God will call enemies. How ſpeedily will they come down, and be levelled in the duſt, and be laid in the chains of darkneſs, that now ſeem ſo happy to the pur-blind world, that cannot ſee the things to come? Fear not that man that muſt ſhortly tremble before that God whom all muſt fear. 3. Be more ſolicitous for the ſecuring of your Conſciences and Salvation, than of your Honours or Eſtates: In every thing that you are put upon, conſult firſt with God and Conſcience; and not with fleſh and blood. It is your daily and moſt ſerious care and watchfulneſs that is requiſite to maintain your integrity; and not a few careleſs thoughts or purpoſes, conjunct with a minding of earthly things. 4. Deal faithfully with every truth which you receive. Take heed of ſubjecting it to carnal intereſts: If once you have affections that can maſter your Underſtandings, you are loſt, and know it not. For when you have a Reſolution to caſt off any duty, you will firſt believe it is no duty: and when you muſt change your judgement for carnal advantages, you will make the change ſeem reaſonable and right: and evil ſhall be proved good when you have a mind to follow it. 5. Make Goſpel-Truths your own, by daily humble ſtudies,

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ariſing to ſuch a ſoundneſs of Judgement, that you may not need to take too much upon truſt; leſt if your guides ſhould miſcarry, you miſcarry with them. Deliver not up your underſtanding in Captivity to any. 6. Yet do not overvalue your own Underſtandings. This Pride hath done that in Church and State, which all diſcerning men are lamenting. They that know but little, ſee not what they want, as well as what they have; nor that imperfection in their knowledge which ſhould humble them, nor that difficulty in things, which ſhould make them diligent and modeſt. 7. Apprehend the neceſſity and Uſefulneſs of Chriſts Officers, Order and Ordinances for the proſperity of his Church: Paſtors muſt guide you, though not ſeduce you, or lead you blind-fold. But chooſe (if you may) ſuch as are judicious, and not ignorant, not raſh but ſober, not formal but ſerious and ſpiritual, not of carnal but heavenly converſations; eſpecially avoid them that divide and follow parties, and ſeek to draw Diſciples to themſelves, and can ſacrifice the *Churches* Unity and Peace to their proud humours or carnal intereſts. Watch carefully that no weakneſſes of the Miniſter do draw you to a diſ-eſteem of the Ordinances of God: nor any of the ſad

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miſcarriages of Profeſſors ſhould cauſe you to ſet leſs by Truth or Godlineſs. Wrong not Chriſt more, becauſe other men have ſo wronged him. Quarrel more with your own unfitneſs and unworthineſs in Ordinances, than with other mens. It is the frame of your own heart that doth more to help or hinder your Comforts, than the quality of thoſe you joyn with. To theſe few Directions added to the reſt in this Book, I ſhall ſubjoyn my hearty Prayers, that you may receive from that Goſpel and Miniſtry which you have owned, ſuch ſtability in the faith, ſuch victory over the fleſh and the world, ſuch apprehenſions of the Love of God in Chriſt, ſuch direction in every ſtrait and duty, that you may Live uprightly, Die peaceably, and Reign Glorioully. *Amen.*

May 9.
1653.

Your ſervant in the Faith and Goſpel of Chriſt.

Rich. Baxter.

TO THE
POOR in SPIRIT.

MY *Dearly Beloved Fellow-Chriſtians, whoſe Souls are taken up with the careful thoughts of attaining and maintaining Peace with God: who are vile in your own eyes, and value the Blood, and Spirit, and Word of your Redeemer, and the hope of the Saints in their approaching Bleſſedneſs, before all the Pomp and Vanities of this world, and Reſolve to give up your ſelves to his Conduct, who is become* the Author of Eternal Salvation to all them that obey him: *For You do I Publiſh theſe following Directions: and to you it is that I direct this Preface. The only Glorious and Infinite God, who made the Worlds, and upholdeth them by his Word, who is attended with Millions of his glorious Angels, and Praiſed continually by his Heavenly Hoſts: who pulleth down the Mighty from their ſeats, and ſcattereth the Proud in the Imaginations of their hearts, and*

maketh his Enemies lick the duſt: to whom the Kings and Conquerours of the Earth are as the ſilliest worms, and the whole world is Nothing, and lighter than Vanity, which he will ſhortly turn into flames before your eyes: This God hath ſent me to you, with that Joyful Meſſage, which needs no more but your believing entertainment, to make it ſufficient to raiſe you from the duſt, and baniſh thoſe terrours and troubles from your hearts, and help you to live like the Sons of God. He commandeth me to tell you, that he takes notice of your ſorrows: he ſtands by when you ſee him not, and ſay, he hath forſaken you: he minds you with greateſt tenderneſs, when you ſay, he hath forgotten you: he numbreth your ſighs: he bottles up your tears: the groans of your hearts do reach his own. He takes it unkindly, that you are ſo ſuſpicious of him: and that all that he hath done for you in the work of Redemption, and all the gracious workings of his Spirit on your ſouls, and all your own peculiar experiences of his Goodneſs, can raiſe you to no higher apprehenſions of his Love! Shall not Love be acknowledged to be Love, when it's grown to a Miracle? when it ſurpaſſeth Comprehenſion! Muſt the Lord ſet up Love and Mercy in the work of Redemption, to be equally admired with his Omnipotency manifeſted

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in the Creation? and call forth the World to this ſwee imployment, that in Secret and in Publick it might be the buſineſs of our lives? and yet ſhall it be ſo overlookt or queſtioned, as if you lived without Love and Mercy in the World? Providence doth its part, by heaping up Mountains of daily Mercies, and theſe it ſets before your eyes: The Goſpel hath eminently done its part by clear deſcribing them, and fully aſſuring them, and this is proclaimed frequently in your ears: And yet is there ſo little in your hearts and mouths? Do you ſee, and hear, and feel, and taſte Mercy and Love? do you live wholly on it? and yet do you ſtill doubt of it? and think ſo meanly of it, and ſo hardly acknowledge it? God takes not this well: but yet he conſidereth your frailty, and takes you not at the worſt. He knows that fleſh will play its part, and the Remnants of Corruption will not be idle: and the Serpent will be ſuggeſting falſe thoughts of God, and will be ſtill ſtriving moſt to obſcure that part of his Glory which is deareſt to him, and eſpecially which is moſt conjoyned with the happineſs of Man. He knows alſo, that ſin will breed ſorrows and fears: and that mans underſtanding is ſhallow, & all his Conceivings of God are exceeding low: and that we are ſo far from God as Creatures, and ſo much further as ſinners, and eſpecially as Conſcious of the abuſe of his Grace, that

there muſt needs follow ſuch a ſtrangeneſs as will damp and dull our apprehenſions of his Love: and ſuch an abatement of our Confidence, as will make us draw back, and look at God afar off. Seeing therefore that at this diſtance no full apprehenſions of Love can be expected: It is the Pleaſure of our Redeemer ſhortly to Return, with ten thouſands of his Saints, with the noble Army of his Martyrs, and the Attendance of his Angels: and to give you ſuch a Convincing Demonſtration of his Love, as ſhall leave no room for one more Doubt. Your Comforts are now but a Taſte, they ſhall be then a Feaſt: They are now but Intermittent, they ſhall be then Continual. How ſoon now do your Conquered fears return? and what an unconſtancy and unevenneſs is there in our Peace? but then our Peace muſt needs be Perfect and Permanent, when we ſhall pleaſe God, and enjoy him in Perfection to Perpetuity. Certainly, Chriſtians, your Comforts ſhould be now more abundant, but that they are not ripe: It is that, and not this, that is your harveſt: I have told you in another Book the miſtake and danger of expecting too much here, and the Neceſſity of Looking and Longing for that Reſt, if we will have Peace indeed! But alas, how hard is this leſſon learned? Unbelievers would have Happineſs: but how fain would they have it in the Creature,

Creature, rather than in God! Believers would rather have their Happineſs in God, than in the Creature: But how fain would they have it without Dying? And no wonder: for when Sin brought in Death, even Grace it ſelf cannot Love it, though it may ſubmit to it: But though Churliſh Death do ſtand in our way, why look we not at the Souls admittance into Reſt! and the Bodies Reſurrection that muſt ſhortly follow? Doubtleſs that Faith by which we are Juſtified and Saved, as it ſits down on the word of Truth as the preſent ground of its confident repoſe, ſo doth it thence look with one eye backward on the Croſs, and with the other forward on the Crown: And if we well obſerve the Scripture Deſcriptions of that Faith, we ſhall find them as frequently magnifying it, and deſcribing it from the latter, as from the former. As it is the duty and glory of faith to look back with Thankful Acknowledgement to a Crucified Chriſt, and his payment of our Ranſom: ſo is it the duty and glory of that ſame Juſtifying Saving Faith to look forward with Deſire and Hope to the return of King Jeſus, and the glorious Celebration of the Marriage of the Lamb, and the Sentencial Juſtification, and the Glorification of his Saints: To believe theſe things unfeignedly which we never ſaw, (nor ever ſpoke with man that did ſee) and to hope for them ſo really as to

let go all present forbidden pleasures, and all worldly hopes and seeming happiness, rather than to hazard the loss of them: this is an eminent part of that Faith by which the Just do live, and which the Scripture doth own as Justifying and Saving: (For it never distinguisheth between Justifying Faith and Saving Faith, as to their nature.) It is therefore a great mistake of some to look only at that one eye of Justifying Faith which looks back upon the Cross, and a great mistake of them on the other hand that look only at that eye of it which beholds the Crown: Both Christ crucified, and Christ interceding, and Christ returning to Justifie and Glorifie, are the objects even of Justifying Saving Faith, most strictly so called. The Scripture oft expresseth the one only: but then it still implieth the other. The Socinians erroniously therefore from Heb. 11. *(where the Examples and Elogies of Faith are set forth) do exclude Christ crucified, or the respect to his Satisfaction, from Justifying Faith, and place it in a meer Expectation of Glory: and others do as ungroundedly affirm, that it is not the Justifying Act of Faith which* Heb. 11. *describeth, because they find not the Cross of Christ there mentioned. For as believing in Christs Blood comprehendeth the End, even the Expectation of Remission and Glory merited by that blood: so the believing of that Glory doth alwaies imply*

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that we believe and expect it as the fruit of Chriſts Ranſom. It is for health and life that we accept and truſt upon our Phyſician: And it is for Juſtification and Salvation that we accept and truſt on Chriſt. The Salvation of our ſouls is the end of our Faith. They that queſtion whether we may believe and obey for our own Salvation, do queſtion whether we may go to the Phyſician and follow his advice for health and life. Why then do you that are Believers ſo much forget the End of your Faith? and that for which it is that you believe? Believing in Chriſt for preſent Mercies only, be they temporal or ſpiritual, is not the true Believing. They are dangerouſly miſtaken that think the thoughts of Heaven to be ſo accidental to the nature and work of Faith, as that they tend only to our comfort, and are not neceſſary to Salvation it ſelf. It is upon your apprehenſions and expectations of that unſeen felicity that both your Peace and Safety do depend. How contrary therefore is it to the nature of a Believer, to forget the place of his Reſt and Conſolation! and to look for ſo much of theſe from the Creatures, in this our preſent Pilgrimage and Priſon, as alas, too commonly we do! Thus do we kill our comforts, and then complain for want of them. How ſhould you have any life or conſtancy of conſolations, that are ſo ſeldom, ſo ſlight, ſo unbelieving, and ſo heartleſs in your

thoughts of Heaven! You know what a folly it is to expect any Peace, which ſhall not come from Chriſt as the Fountain: And you muſt learn as well to underſtand what a folly it is to expect any ſolid Joyes, or ſtable Peace, which is not fetcht from Heaven, as from the End. O that Chriſtians were careful to live with one eye ſtill on Chriſt crucified, and with the other on Chriſt coming in Glory! If the everlaſting Joyes were more in your believing thoughts, ſpiritual Joyes would more abound at preſent in your hearts. It's no more wonder that you are comfortleſs when Heaven is forgotten, or doubtingly remembred, than that you are faint when you eat not, or cold when you ſtir not, or when you have not fire or cloaths.

But when Chriſtians do not only let fall their expectations of the things Unſeen, but alſo heighten their expectations from the Creature: then do they moſt infallibly prepare for their fears, and troubles, and eſtrangedneſs from God, and with both hands draw calamities on their ſouls. Who ever meets with a diſtreſſed complaining ſoul, where one or both of theſe is not apparent? their low expectations from God hereafter, or their high expectations from the Creature now? What doth keep us under ſuch trouble and diſquietneſs, but that we will not expect what God hath Promiſed, or we will needs expect what he Promiſed not? And

then

then we complain when we miſs of thoſe expectations which we fooliſhly and ungroundedly raiſed to our ſelves! We are grieved for croſſes, for loſſes, for wrong from our Enemies, for unkind or unfaithful dealings of our Friends, for ſickneſs, for contempt and diſ-eſteem in the World! But who bid you look for any better? Was it Proſperity, and Riches, and Credit, and Friends, that God called you to believe for? or that you became Chriſtians for, or that you had an abſolute promiſe of in the Word? If you will make promiſes to your ſelf, and then your own promiſes deceive you, whom ſhould you blame for that? Nay, do we not, as it were, neceſſitate God hereby, to embitter all our Comforts below, and to make every creature as a Scorpion to us, becauſe we will needs make them our petty Deities? We have leſs comfort in them than elſe we might have, becauſe we muſt needs have more than we ſhould have. You might have more faithfulneſs from your Friends, more Reputation in the World, more ſweetneſs in all your preſent enjoyments, if you lookt for leſs. Why is it that you can ſcarce name a creature near you, that is not a ſcourge to you, but becauſe you can ſcarce name one that is not your Idol? or, at leaſt, which you do not expect more from than you ought? Nay (which is one of the ſaddeſt conſiderations of this kind that can be imagined)

imagined) God is fain to ſcourge us moſt even by the higheſt Profeſſors of Religion, becauſe we have moſt Idolized them, and had ſuch exceſſive expectations from them. One would have thought it next to an impoſſibility, that ſuch men, and ſo many of them, could ever have been drawn to do that againſt the Church, againſt that Goſpel-Miniſtry, and Ordinances of God (which once ſeemed dearer to them than their lives) which hath ſince been done, and which yet we fear! But a believing eye can diſcern the reaſon of this ſad providence (in part:) Never men were more Idolized: and therefore no wonder if we were never ſo afflicted by any. Alas, when will we learn by Scripture and Providence ſo to know God and the Creature, as to look for far More from him, and Leſs from them! We have looked for Wonders from Scotland, *and what is come of it? We looked that War ſhould have even ſatisfied our deſires, and when it had removed all viſible Impediments, we thought we ſhould have had ſuch a glorious Reformation as the World never knew! And now behold, a* Babel, *and a mangled Deformation! What high Expectations had we from an Aſſembly! what Expectations from a Parliament! and where are they now! O hear the Word of the Lord, ye low-ſpirited People!* [Ceaſe ye from man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils: for wherein

is

is he to be accounted of? *Iſa.* 2. 22.] [Curſed be the man that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm, and whoſe heart departeth from the Lord: For he ſhall be like the Hearth in the Deſart, and ſhall not ſee when good cometh. Bleſſed is the man that truſteth in the Lord, and whoſe Hope the Lord is: For he ſhall be as a tree planted by the waters, &c. *Jer.* 17. 5, 6, 7, 8.] [Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lye: to be laid in the ballance they are altogether lighter than vanity, *Pſal.* 62. 9.] *Let me warn you all, Chriſtians, for the time to come, Take the creature as a creature: remember its frailty, look for no more from it than its part: If you have the neareſt, deareſt, godly friends, expect to feel the ſting of their corruptions, as well as to taſte the ſweetneſs of their grace: And they muſt expect the like from you.*

If you ask me why I ſpeak ſo much of theſe things here? It is, 1. *Becauſe I find that much of the trouble of ordinary Chriſtians comes from their croſſes in the creature, and the fruſtration of theſe their ſinful expectations.* 2. *And becauſe I have ſaid ſo little of in the following Directions, they being intended for the cure of another kind of trouble: therefore I have ſaid thus much here of this.*

Having premiſed this advice, I take my ſelf bound

bound to add one thing more: that is, An Apology for the Publication of this Imperfect Piece: whether just or insufficient, other men must judge. I confess I am so apprehensive of the Luxuriant Fertility, or Licentiousness of the Press of late, as being a design of the Enemy to bury and overwhelm in a croud those Judicious, Pious, Excellent Writings, that before were so commonly read by the People, that I think few men should now print without an Apology: much less such as I; who hath more lamented this inundation of impertinencies? or more accused the Ignorance and Pride of others that must needs disgorge themselves of all their crudities, as if they were such precious conceptions, proceeding from the Holy Ghost, that the world might not without very great injury, be deprived of: and it were pitty that all men should not be made partakers of them? And how come I to go on in the same fault my self? Truly I have no Excuse or Argument, but those of the Times, Necessity and Providence: *which how far they may justifie me, I must leave to the Judge. Being in company with a troubled complaining friend, I perceived that it must be some standing counsel which might be frequently perused, that must satisfactorily answer the complaints that I heard, and not a transient speech, which would quickly slip away: being therefore obliged as a Pastor, and as a Friend, and as a Christian,*

to

to tender my beſt aſſiſtance for relief, I was ſuddenly (in the moment of ſpeaking) moved to promiſe one ſheet of Paper, which might be uſeful to that end. Which promiſe when I attempted to perform, the one ſheet lengthened to thirty, and my one daies (intended) work was drawn out to a juſt month. I went on far before I had the leaſt thought to let any eye behold it, except the Party for whom I wrote it: But at laſt I perceived an impoſſibility of contracting, and I was preſently poſſeſſed with confident apprehenſions, that a Copy of thoſe Directions might be uſeful to many other of my poor Neighbours and Friends that needed them as much: Upon which apprehenſion I preſently permitted my Pen to run more at large, and to deviate from the caſe of the Party that I wrote for: and to take in the common caſe of moſt troubled doubting ſouls. By that time that I had finiſhed it, I received Letters from ſeveral parts, from learned and judicious Divines, importuning me to print more (having underſtood my intentions to deſiſt, as having done too much already, even at firſt:) I confeſs I was not much moved by their importunity, till they ſeconded it with their Arguments: whereof one was, The Experience of the ſucceſs of former Writings, which might aſſure me it was not diſpleaſing to God. I had many that urged me: I had no one but my ſelf to draw me back. I apprehended

that

that a writing of this nature might be useful to the many weak perplexed Christians through the Land. Two reasons did at first come in against it. The first was, That if there were no more written on this Subject than Doctor Sib's *Bruised Reed, and Souls Conflict, and Mr.* Jos. Symonds *Deserted Souls Case and Cure, there need no more: Especially there being also Doctor* Prestons *Works, and many of* Perkins, *to this use: and Mr.* Ball, *and Mr.* Culverwel *of Faith, and divers the like. To this my own Judgement answered, That yet these brief* Directions *might add somewhat that might be useful to the weak, as to the* Method *of their proceedings, if not to the Matter: And my Bretbren stopt my mouth by telling me, that others had written before me of* Heaven *and* Baptism: *and yet my labours were not lost. Next this, I thought the crudity and weakness of the Writing was such, as should prohibit the publication, it being unfit to thrust upon the World, the hasty undigested lines that were written for the use of one person. To this my thoughts replied, That,* 1. *For all that, it might be useful to poor women, and Country people, who most commonly prove the troubled spirits for whose sakes I wrote it. Had I writ for the use of Learned men, I would have tried to make it fitter for their use: and if I could not, I would have sup-*

pressed

preſſed it. 2. It was my pride that nouriſhed this ſcruple, which moved me not to appear ſo homely to the world, and therefore I caſt it by. One thing more I confeſs did much prevail with me to make theſe Papers publick: and that is, the Antinomians common, confident obtruſion of their Anti-Evangelical doctrines and methods for comforting troubled ſouls. They are the moſt notorious Mountebanks in this Art, the higheſt pretenders, and unhappieſt performers, that moſt of the Reformed Churches ever knew. And none uſually are readier to receive their doctrines, than ſuch weak women, or unskilful people, that being in trouble, are like a ſick man in great pain, who is glad to hear what all can ſay, and to make trial of every thing by which he hath any hope of eaſe. And then there is ſo much Opium in theſe Mountebanks Nepenthes, or Antidote of Reſt: ſo many principles of carnal ſecurity and preſumption, which tend to the preſent eaſe of the Patient (whatever follow) that it is no wonder if ſome well-meaning Chriſtians do quickly ſwallow the bait, and proclaim the rare effects of this Medicament, and the admirable skill of this unskilful Sect, to the enſnaring of others, eſpecially that are in the like diſtreſs. Eſpecially when they meet with ſome Divines of our own, who do deliver to them ſome Maſter-points of this Syſteme of Miſtakes, which are

ſo

ſo neceſſarily concatenated to the reſt, that they may eaſily ſee, if they have one, they muſt have all, unleſs they will hold Contradictions. As to inſtance in the Doctrine of Juſtification before Faith: or the diſſolving the Obligation to Puniſhment (which is nothing but Remiſſion of ſin) before Faith: So that nothing remains ſince Chriſts death (as ſome) or ſince Gods Decree (as others) but only to have our Pardon manifeſted, or to be juſtified in conſcience, or (as ſome phraſe it) to have that Juſtification which is terminated in conſcience. There is a very judicious man, Mr, Benjam. Woodbridge *of* Newbury *hath written ſo excellent well againſt this Errour, and in ſo ſmall room, being but one Sermon, that I would adviſe all private Chriſtians to get one of them, and peruſe it, as one of the beſt, eaſieſt, cheapeſt Preſervatives againſt the contagion of this part of Antinomianiſm.*

I had not troubled the Reader with this Apology, had I thought ſo well of this Writing, as to be a ſufficient Apology for it ſelf: or had I not taken it for a hainous crime to ſpeak idly in Print.

For the Doctrine here contained, it is of a middle-ſtrain, between (I think) the Extreams of ſome others, I have laboured ſo to build up Peace, as not thereby to fortifie Preſumption. And perhaps in ſome points you may

ſee

ſee my meaning more plainly, which through the obſcurity of former Writings, I was miſunderſtood in. As for the manner of this Writing, I muſt deſire them that expect Learning or Exactneſs, to turn away their eyes: and know, that I wrote it not for ſuch as they. I uſe not to ſpeak any thing but plain Engliſh to that Sex, or to that Uſe and End for which I wrote theſe Lines. I wrote to the utmoſt verge of my Paper, before I thought to make it publick, and ſo had no room for Marginal Quotations, (nor time to tranſcribe that Coppy that I might have room) nor indeed much mind of them, if I had had both room and time.

As in all the removes of my life I have been ſtill led to that place or ſtate which was furtheſt from my own thoughts, and never deſigned or contrived by my ſelf: ſo all the Writings that yet I have publiſhed, are ſuch as have been by ſome ſudden unexpected occaſion extorted from me, while thoſe that I moſt affected have been ſtifled in the conception: and thoſe that I have moſt laboured in, muſt lie buried in the duſt: that I may know it's God that is the Diſpoſer of all. Experience perſwadeth me to think, that God, who hath compelled me hereto, intendeth to make this haſty writing a means for the calming of ſome Troubled Souls: Which if he do, I have my End. If I can do nothing to the Churches publick Peace, either through

my own unskilfulneſs and unworthineſs, or through the prevalency of the Malady: yet will it be my comfort to further the Peace of the pooreſt Chriſtian. (Though to the former alſo I ſhall contribute my beſt endeavours: and am with this ſending to the Preſs ſome few ſheets to that end, with our Worceſterſhire Agreement.) *The full accompliſhment of both: the ſubduing of the Prince of Darkneſs, Confuſion and Contention: the deſtroying of that pride, ſelf-eſteem, ſelf-ſeeking, and carnal-mindedneſs, which remaining even in the beſt, are the diſturbers of all Peace: the fuller diſcovery of the ſinfulneſs of impeaceable Principles, Diſpoſitions and Practices: the nearer cloſure of all true Believers, and the haſtning of the Churches Everlaſting Peace: Theſe are his daily Prayers, who is*

May 7. 1653. *A zealous deſirer of the Peace of the Church, and of every faithful ſoul,*

RICHARD BAXTER.

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In XXXII. DIRECTIONS.

IT muſt be underſtood, that the Caſe here to be reſolved is not, How an unhumbled prophane ſinner, that never was Convinced of Sin and Miſery ſhould be brought to a ſetled peace of Conſcience. Their Carnal Peace muſt firſt be broken, and they muſt be ſo far humbled, as to find the want and worth of Mercy, that Chriſt and his Conſolations may not ſeem contemptible in their eyes. It is

none of my buſineſs now, to give any advice for the furthering of this Conviction or Humiliation. But the Caſe in hand is; *How a Sinner may attain to a ſetled peace of Conſcience, and ſome competent meaſure of the Joy of the holy Ghoſt, who hath been convinced of Sin and Miſery, and long made a Profeſſion of Holineſs, but liveth in continual doubtings of their ſincerity, and fears of Gods wrath, becauſe of an exceeding Deadneſs of ſpirit, and a want of that Love to God, and Delight in him, and ſweetneſs in Duty, and witneſs of the Spirit, and Communion with God, and other the like Evidences which are found in the Saints.* How far the party is right or wrong in the Diſcovery of theſe Wants, I now meddle not. Whether they Judge rightly or wrongly, the Directions may be Uſeful to them. And though I purpoſely meddle not with the unhumbled, that feel not the want of Chriſt and Mercy, yet moſt that falls may be uſefull to all that profeſs the Chriſtian faith. For I ſhall ſtudy ſo to avoid the extreams in my doctrinal Directions, as may conduce to your eſcaping the deſperate extreams of *Ungrounded Comforts*, and *Carnall Terrours* in your own ſpirit.

Of my *Directions*, the firſt ſhall be only General, and the reſt more particular: And in all of them I muſt intreat you, 1. To obſerve the Order and Method, as well as the Matter; and that you would practiſe them in the ſame order as I place them. 2. And to remember that it is not only comfortable words, but it is *Directions* for your own practice which here I preſcribe you; And therefore that it is not the bare Reading of them that will Cure you: but if you mean to have the benefit of them, you muſt beſtow more time in Practiſing them, than I have done in Penning them: yea you muſt make it the work of your life. And let not that ſtartle you, or

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ſeem tedious to you; for it will be no more grievous a work to a well tempered ſoul, than eating, or drinking, or ſleep, or recreation is to an healthful Body; and than it is to an honeſt woman to Love and Delight in her Husband and her Children: which is no grievous task.

DIRECTION I.

1. *Get as clear a diſcovery as you can of the true Cauſe of your doubts and Troubles: for if you ſhould miſtake in the Cauſe, it would much fruſtrate the moſt excellent means for the Cure.*

THe very ſame Doubts and Complaints may come from ſeveral Cauſes in ſeveral Perſons, and therefore admit not of the ſame way of Cure: 'Some-'time the Cauſe begins in the body, and thence pro-'ceedeth to the mind: ſometime it begins in the 'mind, and thence diſtempereth the body: ſometime 'in the mind, it is moſt or firſt from worldly 'croſſes, and thence proceedeth to ſpiritual things: 'And of ſpiritual matters, ſometimes it begins upon 'ſcruples or differences in Religion, or points of 'Doctrine; ſometimes and moſt commonly, from 'the ſenſe of our own Infirmities; ſometimes it is 'only from ordinary Infirmities; ſometimes from 'ſome extraordinary decays of inward Grace; ſome-'time from the neglects of ſome weighty duty; and 'ſometimes from the deep wounds of ſome Hainous 'ſecret, or ſcandalous ſin; And ſometimes it is meer-'ly from the freſh diſcovery of that which before

we never did discern; And sometimes from the violent assault of extraordinary Temptations; which of these is your own Case, you must be careful to find out, and to apply the means for cure accordingly. Even of true Christians, the same means will not fit all. The difference of Natures as well as of actual Cases must be considered. One hath need of that tender handling, which would undo another; and he again hath need of that rousing which another cannot bear. And therefore understand that when I have given you all the Directions that I can, I must (in the end hereof) advise you to take the Counsel of a skilful Minister in applying and making use of them; For it is in this, as in the Case of Physick; When we have written the best Books of Receipts, or for Methodical Cures, yet we must advise people to take heed how they use them without the advice of a learned and faithful Physitian. For Medicines must not be only fitted to Diseases, but to Bodies. That Medicine will kill one man, which will cure another of the same distemper: such difference there may be in their age, strength, complexion, and other things. So is it much in our present Case. And therefore as when all the Physick Books in the world are written, and all Receipts known, yet will there be still a Necessity of Physitians; so when all Discoveries and Directions are made in Divinity, there will still be a Necessity of a constant standing Ministry. And as ignorant Women and Empriks do kill oft-times more than they Cure, though they have the best Receipts, for want of Judgement and experience to use them aright; so do ignorant Teachers and Guides by mens souls, though they can say the same words as a Judicious Pastor, and repeat the same Texts of Scripture. Not that I mean, that such can do no good; Yes, much

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no doubt, if they will humbly, compaſſionately and faithfully improve their Talents within the verge of their own Calling; which if they go beyond, ordinarily a remarkable Judgement followeth their beſt labours; both to the Churches and particular ſouls that make uſe of them. And therefore becauſe (if my conjectural prognoſticks fail not, as I daily pray they may) we are like to be more tryed and plagued this way, than ever were any of our fore-fathers ſince *Adams* dayes till now; and ſeeing this is the hour of our Temptation, wherein God is purpoſely ſeparating the chaff, and diſcovering to the world, the dangers of injudicious miſguided Zeal; I ſhall therefore both firſt and laſt adviſe you, as ever you would have a ſetled peace of Conſcience, keep out of the hand of vagrant and ſeducing Mountebanks, under what Names, or Titles, or pretences ſoever they may aſſault you. Eſpecially ſuſpect all that beſtow as much pains to win you to their party, as to win you to Chriſt.

DIRECTION II.

2. *Make as full a Diſcovery as you can, how much of the trouble of your mind doth ariſe from your Melancholy, and bodily diſtempers, and how much from diſcontenting afflictions in your worldly Eſtate, or Friends, or Name; And according to your Diſcovery make uſe of the Remedy.*

I Put theſe two Cauſes of trouble here together in the beginning, becauſe I will preſently diſmiſs them, and apply the reſt of theſe Directions only to

those Troubles that are raised from sins and wants in Grace.

1. For Melancholy, I have by long experience found it to have so great and common a hand in the fears and troubles of mind, that I meet not with one of many that live in great Troubles and fears for any long time together, but Melancholy is the main seat of them: though they feel nothing in their body, but all in their Mind. I would have such persons make use of some able godly Physitian, and he will help them to discern how much of their Trouble comes from Melancholy. Where this is the Cause, usually the party is Fearful of almost every thing: a word, or a sudden thought will disquiet them: Sometimes they are sad and scarce know why: all Comforts are of no continuance with them: but as soon as you have done comforting them, and they be never so well satisfied, yet the trouble returns in a few dayes or hours, as soon as the dark and troubled spirits return to their former force: They are still addicted to musing and solitarinesse, and thoughts will run in their minds, that they cannot lay them by; If it go any thing far; they are almost alwayes assaulted with Temptations to Blasphemy, to doubt whether there be a God, or a Christ, or the Scriptures be true; or whether there be a Heaven or a Hell: and oft tempted to speak some blasphemous words against God; and this with such importunity, that they can hardly forbear: and oft-times they are tempted to make away themselves. When it goes so far, they are next the loss of the use of reason, if it be not prevented.

Now to those that find that Melancholy is the Cause of their Troubles, I would give this advice.

1. Expect not that Rational, Spiritual Remedies should

ſhould ſuffice for this Cure: For you may as well expect that a good Sermon or comfortable words ſhould cure the falling Sickneſs, or Palſie, or a broken head, as to be a ſufficient Cure to your Melancholy fears. For this is as real a bodily diſeaſe as the other; Only becauſe it works on the ſpirits and phantaſie, on which words of advice do alſo work, therefore ſuch words, and Scripture, and Reaſon, may ſomewhat reſiſt it, and may palliate or allay ſome of the effects at the preſent; but as ſoon as time hath worn off the force and effects of theſe Reaſons, the diſtemper preſently returns.

For the Humour hath the advantage, 1. Of continual preſence. 2. Of a more neceſſary, natural and ſenſible way of working. As if a man be in an eaſie Lethargy; you may awake him ſo long as you are calling on him aloud, but as ſoon as you ceaſe, he is aſleep again; Such is the caſe of the Melancholy in their ſorrows; For its as natural for Melancholy to cauſe fears and diſquietneſs of mind, as for Phlegm in a Lethargy to cauſe ſleep.

Do not therefore lay the blame on your Books, Friends, Counſels, Inſtructions (no nor all on your Soul,) if theſe Troubles be not cured by words. But labour to diſcern truly how much of your Trouble comes this way, and then fix it in your mind in all your Enquiries, Reading and Hearing, that it is the other part of your Trouble which is truly Rational, and not this part of it which is from Melancholy, that theſe means were ordained to remove (though God may alſo bleſs them extraordinarily to do both.) Only conſtant importunate Prayer is a fit and ſpecial means for the Curing of all.

2. When you have truly found out how much of your Diſquietneſs proceeds from Melancholy, ac-

quit your ſoul from that part of it: Still remember in all your ſelf-examinations, ſelf-judgings and reflections on your heart, that it is not directly to be charged with thoſe ſorrows that come from your Spleen: ſave only remotely, as all other Diſeaſes are the fruits of ſin; as a Lethargick dulneſs is the deſerved fruit of ſin; but he that ſhould charge it immediately on his ſoul, ſhould wrong himſelf, and he that would attempt the Cure, muſt do it on the Body.

3. If you would have theſe fears and troubles removed, apply your ſelf to the proper cure of Melancholy. 1. Avoid all paſſions of ſorrow, fear and anger as much as you can; and all occaſions and diſcontent and grief. 2. Avoid much ſolitarineſs, and be moſt commonly in ſome cheerful company: Not that I would have you do as the fooliſh ſinners of the world do, to drink away Melancholy, and keep company with ſenſual, vain and unprofitable perſons that will draw you deeper into ſin, and ſo make your wound greater inſtead of healing it, and multiply your Troubles when you are forced to look back on your ſinful loſs of time; But keep company with the more cheerful ſort of the Godly; *There is no mirth like the mirth of Believers, which faith doth fetch from the blood of Chriſt, and from the Promiſes of the Word, and from experiences of Mercy, and from the ſerious fore-apprehenſions of our everlaſting Bleſſedneſs.* Converſe with men of ſtrongeſt faith, that have this heavenly mirth, and can ſpeak experimentally of the Joy of the holy Ghoſt; and theſe will be a great help to the reviving of your ſpirit, and changing your Melancholy habit, ſo far as without a Phyſitian it may be expected. Yet ſometimes it may not be amiſs to conſer with ſome that are in your own Caſe, that you may

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ſee that your Condition is not ſingular. For Melancholy people in ſuch diſtreſſes are ready to think, that never any was in the Caſe as they are in, or at leaſt, never any that were truly godly; when you hear people of the moſt upright lives, and that truly fear God, to have the very ſame complaints as you have your ſelf, it may give you ſome hopes that it is not ſo bad as you before did imagine. However be ſure that you avoid ſolitarineſs as much as you well can. 3. Alſo take heed of too deep, fixed, muſing thoughts; ſtudying and ſerious meditating be not duties for the deeply-Melancholy (as I ſhall ſhew more in the following Directions;) You muſt let thoſe alone till you are better able to perform them; leſt by attempting thoſe duties, which you cannot perform, you ſhall utterly diſable your ſelf from all: Therefore I would adviſe you, by all means to ſhake and rowſe your ſelf out of ſuch muſings, and ſuddenly to turn your thoughts away to ſomething elſe. 4. To this end, be ſure that you avoid Idleneſs and want of imployment: which as it is a life not pleaſing to God, ſo is it the opportunity for Melancholy thoughts to be working, and the chiefeſt ſeaſon for Satan to tempt you. Never let the Devil find you unimployed: but ſee that you go chearfully about the works of your Calling, and follow it with diligence; and that time which you redeem for ſpiritual exerciſes, let it be moſt ſpent in Thankſgiving, and Praiſes, and Heavenly Conference.

Theſe things may do much for prevention, and abating your diſeaſe, if it be not gone too far: but if it be, you were beſt have recourſe to the Phyſitian, and expect Gods bleſſing in the uſe of means: and you will find, when your Body is once cured, the diſquietneſs of your Mind will vaniſh of it ſelf.

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2. The second part of this Direction, was, That you take notice how much of your disquietness may proceed from outward Crosses; for it is ordinary for these to lie at the root and bring the heart into a disquiet and discontent, and then trouble for sin doth follow after. Alas, how oft have I seen that verified of the Apostle, 2 *Cor.* 7. 10. The sorrow of the world worketh death. How many, even godly people have I known, that through crosses in children or friends, or losses in their estates, or wrongs from men, or perplexities that through some unadvisedness they were cast into, or the like, have fallen into mortal diseases, or into such a fixed Melancholy, that some of them have gone besides themselves, and others have lived in fears and doubting ever after, by the removal of the disquietness to their consciences? How sad a thing is it that we should thus add to our own afflictions? and the heavier we judge the burden, the more we lay on! As if God had not done enough, or would not sufficiently afflict us? We may more comfortably bear that which God layeth on us, than that which we immediately lay upon our selves! Crosses are not great or small according to the bulk of the matter, but according chiefly to the mind of the sufferer. Or else how could holy men *rejoyce in Tribulation, and be exceeding glad that they are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ?* Reproaches, wrongs, losses are all without you; unless you open them the door wilfully your self, they cannot come in to the heart. God hath not put the Joy or Grief of your Heart in any other mans power, but in your own. It is you therefore that do your selves the greatest mischief. God afflicts your body, or men wrong you in your state or name (a small hurt if it go no further;) and therefore you

you will afflict your ſoul! But a ſadder thing yet is it to conſider of, that men fearing God ſhould ſo highly value the things of the world. They who in their Covenants with Chriſt, are engaged to renounce the world, the fleſh and the devil! They that have taken God in Chriſt for their Portion, for their All! and have reſigned themſelves and all that they have to Chriſts diſpoſe! whoſe very buſineſs in this world, and their Chriſtian life, conſiſteth ſo much in reſiſting the devil, mortifying the fleſh, and overcoming the world: and it is Gods buſineſs in his inward works of Grace, and his outward teachings, and ſharp afflictions, and examples of others to convince them of the vanity and vexation of the world, and throughly to wean them from it: and yet that it ſhould be ſo high in their eſtimation, and ſit ſo cloſe to their hearts, that they cannot bear the loſs of it without ſuch diſcontent, diſquiet and diſtraction of mind: Yea though when all is gone, they have their God left them, they have their Chriſt ſtill, whom they took for their Treaſure, they have opportunities for their ſouls, they have the ſure promiſe of Glory, yea and a promiſe, that *all things ſhall work together for their good*; yea and for that one thing that is taken from them, they have yet an hundred outward Mercies remaining; that yet even Believers ſhould have ſo much unbelief! and have their Faith to ſeek when they ſhould uſe it and live by it! and that God ſhould ſeem ſo ſmall in their eyes as not to ſatisfie or quiet them, unleſs they have the world with him; and that the world ſhould ſtill ſeem ſo Amiable, when God hath done ſo much to bring it into contempt! Truly this (and more) ſhews that the work of *Mortification* is very imperfect in profeſſors, and that we bend not the force of our daily

daily ſtrivings and endeavours that way. If Chriſtians did beſtow but as much time and pains, in Mortifying the fleſh, and getting down the Intereſt of it in the ſoul, that Chriſts Intereſt may be advanced, as they do about Controverſies, external duties, formalities, tasks of devotion, and ſelf-tormenting fears, O what excellent Chriſtians ſhould we then be! and how happily would moſt of our diſquiet be removed! Alas if we are ſo unfit to part with one outward comfort now, upon the diſpoſal of our fathers providence, how ſhould we forſake all for Chriſt? or what ſhall we do at death when all muſt be parted with? As ever therefore you would live in true Chriſtian Peace, ſet more by Chriſt, and leſs by the world, and all things in it; and hold all that you poſſeſs ſo looſely, that it may not be grievous to you when you muſt leave them.

So much for the Troubles that ariſe from your Body and outward ſtate; All the reſt ſhall be directed for the Curing of thoſe Troubles that ariſe immediatly from more Spiritual Cauſes.

DIRECTION III.

3. *Be ſure that you firſt lay ſound apprehenſions of Gods nature in your underſtanding, and lay them deeply.*

THis is the firſt Article of your Creed, and the firſt part of *Life Eternal, to know God!* His ſubſtance is quite paſt humane underſtanding; therefore never make any attempt to reach the knowledge of it, or to have any poſitive conceivings of it, for they

they will be all but Idols, or falſe conceptions: but his Attributes are manifeſted to our underſtandings. Well, conſider, that even under the terrible Law, when God proclaims to *Moſes* his own Name, and therein his Nature, *Exod.* 34. 6, 7. the firſt and greateſt part is, *The Lord God, Merciful and Gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin.* And he hath ſworn, *that he hath no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner, but rather that he return and live.* Think not therefore of Gods Mercifulneſs, with diminiſhing, extenuating thoughts, nor limit it by the bounds of our frail underſtandings; *For the heavens are not ſo far above the earth, as his thoughts and ways are above ours.* Still remember that you muſt have no low thoughts of Gods Goodneſs; but apprehend it as bearing proportion with his Power. As it is Blaſphemy to limit his Power, ſo it is to limit his Goodneſs. The advantages that your ſoul will get by this right knowledge and eſtimation of Gods Goodneſs, will be theſe:

1. This will make God appear more Amiable in your eyes; and then you will Love him more readily and abundantly. And Love, 1. Is effectually conſolatory in the very working; So much Love, uſually ſo much Comfort (I mean this Love of Complacency; for a Love of Deſire there may be without comfort.) 2. It will breed perſwaſions of Gods Love to you again, and ſo Comfort. 3. It will be an unqueſtionable evidence of true Grace, and ſo Comfort.

The Affections follow the Underſtandings conceptions. If you think of God as one that is glad of all advantages againſt you, and delighteth in his Creatures miſery, it is impoſſible you ſhould Love him. The Love of our ſelves is ſo deeply rooted in

nature,

nature, that we cannot lay it by, nor love any thing that is Abſolutely and directly againſt us. We conceive of the Devil as an abſolute Enemy to God and man, and one that ſeeks our deſtruction, and therefore we cannot Love him: And the great Cauſe why troubled ſouls do Love God no more, is becauſe they repreſent him to themſelves in an ugly odious ſhape: To think of God as one that ſeeks and delighteth in mans ruine, is to make him as the devil: and then what wonder if inſtead of loving him, and delighting in him, you tremble at the thoughts of him, and fly from him! As I have obſerved Children, when they have ſeen the Devil painted on a wall, in an ugly ſhape, they have partly feared, and partly hated it: If you do ſo by God in your fancy, it is not putting the Name of [God] on him when you have done, that will reconcile your affections to him, as long as you ſtrip him of his Divine Nature. Remember the holy Ghoſts deſcription of God, 1 *Joh.* 4. 16. *God is Love.* Write theſe words deep in your Underſtanding.

2. Hereby you will have this Advantage alſo, that your thoughts of God will be more ſweet and delightful to you: For as Glorious and beautiful ſights to your eyes, and melodious ſounds to your ears, and ſweet ſmels, taſtes, *&c.* are all delightful: when things deformed, ſtinking, *&c.* are all loathſome; and we turn away from one with abhorrency, but for the other, we would often ſee, taſte, *&c.* and enjoy them; ſo is it with the objects of our mind; God hath given no command for Duty, but what moſt perfectly agreeth with the nature of the object. He hath therefore bid us Love God, and Delight in him above all, becauſe he is above all in Goodneſs; even infinitely and unconceivably Good; elſe we could

could not Love him above all, nor would he ever command us ſo to do; The object is ever as exactly fitted to its part (as to draw out the Love and Delight of our hearts) as the Precept is on its part (to oblige us to it.) And indeed the Nature of things is a precept to duty, and it which we call, The Law of Nature.

3. Hereupon will follow this further Advantage, that your Thoughts will be both eaſilier drawn toward God, and more frequent and conſtant on him. For delightful objects draw the heart to them, as the Load-ſtone, doth the Iron; How gladly, and freely, and frequently do you think of your deareſt friends? And if you did firmly conceive of God, as one that is ten thouſand times more gracious, Loving and Amiable than any friend that you have in the world, it would make you not only to Love him above all friends, but alſo more freely, delightfully and unwearied to think of him.

4. And then you would hence have this further Advantage, that you would have leſs backwardneſs to any Duty, and leſs wearineſs in Duty: you would find more delight in Prayer, Meditation and ſpeech of God, when once God himſelf were more Lovely and delightful in your eyes.

5. All theſe Advantages would produce a further, that is, The growth of all your Graces: For it is impoſſible, but this growth of Love, and frequent delightful thoughts of God, and addreſſes to him, ſhould cauſe an increaſe of all the reſt.

6. Hereupon your Evidences would be more clear and diſcernable: For Grace in ſtrength and action would be eaſily found; and would not this reſolve all your doubts at once?

7. Yea the very exerciſe of theſe ſeveral Graces would be comfortable.

8. And

8. And hereupon you would have more humble familiarity and communion with God: For Love, Delight and frequent addreſſes would overcome ſtrangeneſs and diſacquaintance, which make us fly from God, as a Fiſh or Bird, or wild Beaſt, will from the face of a man, and would give us acceſs with boldneſs and confidence. And this would baniſh ſadneſs and terrour, as the Sun diſpelleth darkneſs and cold.

9. At leaſt you would hence have this advantage, That the fixed Apprehenſion of Gods Goodneſs and merciful Nature, would cauſe a fixed apprehenſion of the Probability of your Happineſs, as long as you are willing to be Happy in Gods way. For reaſon will tell you, that he who is Love it ſelf, and whoſe Goodneſs is equal to his Almightineſs, and who hath ſworn, that he hath no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner, but rather that he repent and live, will not deſtroy a poor ſoul that lyeth in ſubmiſſion at his feet, and is ſo far from reſolved rebellion againſt him, that it grieveth that it is no better, and can pleaſe him no more.

10. However, theſe right apprehenſions of God would overcome thoſe terrours which are raiſed only by falſe apprehenſions of him: And doubtleſs a very great part of mens cauſleſs troubles, are raiſed from ſuch miſapprehenſions of God. For Satan knows that if he can Bring you to think of God as a cruel Tyrant and blood-thirſty man hater, then he can drive you from him in terrour, and turn all your Love and cheerful obedience into hatred and ſlaviſh fear. I ſay therefore again, Do not only get, but alſo fix deep in your underſtanding, the higheſt thoughts of Gods natural Goodneſs and Graciouſneſs that poſſibly you can raiſe: for when they are at the higheſt, they come ſhort ten thouſand fold.

Object.

Object. But, Gods Goodneſs lyeth not in Mercy to men, as I have read in great Divines: he may be perfectly Good, though he ſhould for ever torment the moſt innocent creatures?

Anſw. Theſe are ignorant preſumptuous intruſions into that which is unſearchable. Where doth Scripture ſay as you ſay? Judge of God, as he revealeth himſelf; or you will but delude your ſelf, and abuſe him. All his works repreſent him merciful: for *his Mercy is over all his works*, and legible in them all. His word ſaith, *He is Good and doth Good*, *Pſal.* 119. 68. and 145. 9. How himſelf doth proclaim his own Name, *Exod.* 34. 6, 7. I told you before. The moſt merciful men are his livelieſt Image: and therefore he plants Mercy in them in their converſion, as a principal part of their new nature: and commands of mercifulneſs are a great part of his Law; and he bids us, *Be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful*, Luke 6. 36. Now if this were none of his Nature, how could he be the pattern of our new nature herein? and if he were not infinitely Merciful himſelf, how could we be required to be Merciful as he is? Who dare ſay, I am more Merciful than God?

Object. But God is Juſt as well as Merciful; and for all his Merciful nature, he will damn moſt of the world for ever in hell.

Anſw. 1. But *James* ſaith, *Mercy rejoyceth againſt Judgement*, James 2. 13. 2. God is neceſſarily the Governour of the world (while there is a world) and therefore muſt govern it in Juſtice, and ſo muſt not ſuffer his Mercy to be perpetually abuſed by wicked, wilful, contemptuous ſinners. But then conſider two things; 1. That he deſtroyeth not humble ſouls that lye at his feet, and are willing to have Mercy on his

easie terms; but only the ſtubborn deſpiſers of his Mercy: He damneth none but thoſe that will not be ſaved in his way; that is, that will not accept of Chriſt and ſalvation freely given them (I ſpeak of thoſe that hear the Goſpel: for others, their caſe is more unknown to us:) And is it any diminution to his infinite Mercy, that he will not ſave thoſe that will not be intreated to accept of ſalvation? 2. And conſider how long he uſeth to wait on ſinners, and even beſeech them to be reconciled to him, before he deſtroyeth them: and that he heapeth multitudes of Mercies on them, even in their rebellion, to draw them to Repentance, and ſo to Life? and is it unmercifulneſs yet if ſuch men periſh?

Object. But if God were ſo infinite in Mercy, as you ſay, Why doth he not make all theſe men willing, that ſo they may be ſaved?

Anſw. God having created the world, and all things in it, at firſt, did make them in a certain nature and order, and ſo eſtabliſh them as by a fixed Law: and he thereupon is their Governour, to govern every thing according to its nature. Now mans Nature was to be Principled with an Inclination to his own Happineſs, and to be lead to it by objects in a Moral way, and in the choice of means to be a free agent, and the Guider of himſelf under God. As Governour of the Rational creature, God doth continue that ſame courſe of Ruling them by Laws, and drawing them by ends and objects, as their natures do require: And in this way he is not wanting to them: His Laws are now Laws of Grace, and univerſal in the tenour of the free gift and Promiſe: for he hath there given life in Chriſt, to all that will have it: and the objects propounded are ſufficient in their kind, to work even the moſt wonderful effects on mens

ſouls;

ſouls; for they are God himſelf, and Chriſt, and glory: Beſides, God giveth men natural faculties, that they may have the uſe of reaſon; and there is nothing more unreaſonable than to refuſe this offered Mercy. He giveth inducing Arguments in the written Word and Sermons; and addeth ſuch Mercies and Afflictions that one would think ſhould bow the hardeſt heart. Beſides, the ſtrivings and motions of his Spirit within, which are more than we can give an account of. Now is not this as much as belongs to God as Governour of the Creature according to its Nature? And for the Giving of a New nature, and Creating New hearts in men, after all their rebellious rejecting of Grace, this is a certain Miracle of Mercy, and belongs to God in another Relation (even as the free chooſer of his Elect,) and not directly as the Governour of the univerſe. This is from his ſpecial Providence, and the former from his General. Now ſpecial Providences are not to be as common as the General, nor to ſubvert Gods ordinary eſtabliſhed Courſe of Government. If God pleaſe to ſtop Jordan, and dry up the Red Sea for the paſſage of the *Iſraelites*, and to cauſe the Sun to ſtand ſtill for *Joſhua*, muſt he do ſo ſtill for every man in the world, or elſe be accounted unmerciful? The ſenſe of this Objection is plainly this: God is not ſo rich in Mercy, except he will New make all the World, or Govern it above its Nature. Suppoſe a King know his Subjects to be ſo wicked, that they have every one a full deſign to famiſh or kill themſelves, or poiſon themſelves with ſomething which is enticing by its ſweetneſs. The King not only makes a Law, ſtrictly charging them all to forbear to touch that poiſon, but he ſendeth ſpecial Meſſengers to entreat them to it, and tell them the danger. If theſe men will not

hear him, but wilfully poiſon themſelves, is he therefore unmerciful? But ſuppoſe that he hath three or four of his ſons that are infected with the ſame wickedneſs, and he will not only command and intreat them, but he will alſo lock them up, or keep the poiſon from them, or will feed them by violence with better food: is he unmerciful, unleſs he will do ſo by all the reſt of his Kingdom?

Laſtly, If all this will not ſatisfie you; Conſider, 1. That it is moſt certain, that God is Love, and infinite in Mercy, and hath no pleaſure in the death of ſinners. 2. But it is utterly uncertain to us, how God worketh on mans will inwardly by his Spirit. 3. Or yet what intollerable inconvenience there may be if God ſhould work in other wayes, therefore we muſt not upon ſuch uncertainties, deny certainties: nor from ſome unreaſonable ſcruples about the manner of Gods working Grace, deny the bleſſed Nature of God, which himſelf hath moſt evidently proclaimed to the world.

I have ſaid the more of this, becauſe I find Satan harp ſo much on this ſtring with many troubled ſouls, eſpecially on the advantage of ſome common doctrines. For falſe Doctrine ſtill tends to the overthrow of ſolid Peace and Comfort. Remember therefore before all other thoughts for the obtaining of Peace, to get high thoughts of the Gracious and Lovely Nature of God.

DIRE-

Direction IV.

4. Next this, *Be ſure that you deeply apprehend the Gracious Nature, Diſpoſition and Office of the Mediatour Jeſus Chriſt.*

THough there can no more be ſaid of the Gracious Nature of the Son, than of the Father's, even that his Goodneſs is Infinite; yet theſe two advantages this conſideration will add unto the former. 1. You will ſee here Goodneſs and Mercy in its condeſcenſion, and neerer to you than in the Divine Nature alone it was. Our thoughts of God are neceſſarily more ſtrange, becauſe of our infinite diſtance from the God-head; and therefore our apprehenſions of Gods Goodneſs will be the leſs working, becauſe leſs familiar. But in Chriſt God is come down into our Nature, and ſo Infinite Goodneſs and Mercy is incarnate. *The man Chriſt Jeſus is able* now *to ſave to the utmoſt all that come to God by him. We have a Merciful High-Prieſt that is acquainted with our infirmities.* 2. Herein we ſee the Will of God putting forth it ſelf for our help in the moſt aſtoniſhing way that could be imagined. Here is more than meerly a Gracious inclination. It is an *Office* of ſaving and ſhewing Mercy alſo that Chriſt hath undertaken; *even to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt*: to bring home ſtraying ſouls to God: to be the great Peace-maker between God and man: to Reconcile God to man, and man to God: and ſo to be the Head and Husband of his People. Certainly the Devil ſtrangely wrongeth poor troubled ſouls in

this point; that he can bring them to have such hard suspicious thoughts of Christ, and so much to overlook the Glory of Mercy which so shineth in the face of the Son of Mercy it self. How can we more contradict the Nature of Christ, and the Gospel-description of him, than to think him a destroying hater of his creatures, and one that watcheth for our halting, and hath more mind to hurt us than to help us? How could he have manifested more willingness to save? and more tender compassion to the souls of men, than he hath fully manifested? That the Godhead should condescend to assume our Nature, is a thing so wonderful, even to astonishment, that it puts faith to it to apprehend it: For it is ten thousand times more condescension, than for the greatest King to become a Fly or a Toad to save such creatures. And shall we ever have low and suspicious thoughts of the Gracious and Merciful Nature of Christ after so strange and full a discovery of it? If twenty were ready to drown in the sea, and if one that were able to swim and fetch them all out, should cast himself into the water, and offer them his help, were it not foolish ingratitude for any to say, *I know not yet whether he be willing to help me, or not*; and so to have Jealous thoughts of his good will; and so perish in refusing his help? How tenderly did Christ deal with all sorts of sinners? He professed that he *came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.* Did he weep over a rejected unbelieving people, and was he desirous of their desolation? *How oft would he have gathered them as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings* (mark, that he would have done this for them that he cast off) *and they would not?* When his Disciples would have had *fire come down from Heaven to*

consume

conſume thoſe that refuſed him, he reproves them, and tells them, *They knew not of what ſpirit they were of* (the common caſe of them that miſcarry, by ſuffering their zeal to over-run their Chriſtian Wiſdom and meekneſs.) Yea he prayeth for his crucifiers, and that on the Croſs, not forgetting them in the heat of his ſufferings: Thus he doth by the wicked: but to thoſe that follow him, his tenderneſs is unſpeakable, as you would have ſaid your ſelf, if you had but ſtood by and ſeen him waſhing his Diſciples feet, and wiping them; or bidding *Thomas* put his finger into his ſide, *and be not faithleſs, but believing.* Alas, that the Lord Jeſus ſhould come from Heaven to earth, from Glory into humane fleſh, and paſs through a life of miſery to a Croſs, and from the Croſs to the grave, to manifeſt openly to the world the abundance of his Love, and the tenderneſs of his heart to ſinners, and that after all this we ſhould ſuſpect him of cruelty, or hard-heartedneſs and unwillingneſs to ſhew mercy, and that the devil can ſo far delude us, as to make us think of the Lamb of God, as if he were a Tyger or devourer!

But I will ſay no more of this, becauſe Dr. *Sibbs* in his *Bruiſed Reed* hath ſaid ſo much already: Only Remember, that if you would methodically proceed to the attaining of ſolid Comfort, this is the next ſtone that muſt be laid; You muſt be deeply poſſeſſed with apprehenſions of the moſt Gracious Nature and Office of the Redeemer, and the exceeding tenderneſs of his heart to loſt ſinners.

Direction. V.

5. The next ſtep in right order to Comfort is this: *You muſt believe and conſider the full ſufficiency of Chriſts Sacrifice and Ranſome for all.*

THe Controverſies about this you need not be troubled at: for as almoſt all confeſs this ſufficiency, ſo the Scripture it ſelf, by the plainneſs and fulneſs of its expreſſion, makes it as clear as the light, that Chriſt dyed *for All.* The fuller proof of this I have given you in publick, and ſhall do yet more publikely, if God will. If Satan would perſwade you either that no Ranſome or Sacrifice was ever given for you, or that therefore you have no Redeemer to truſt in, and no Saviour to believe in, and no Sanctuary to fly to from the wrath of God; he muſt firſt prove you either to be no loſt ſinner, or to be a final impenitent unbeliever, that is, that you are dead already; or elſe he muſt delude your underſtanding, to make you think that Chriſt dyed not for *All*; and then I confeſs he hath a ſore advantage againſt your faith and comfort.

Dire-

DIRECTION. VI.

6. The next thing in order to be done is this: *Get clear apprehenſions of the freeneſs, fulneſs, and univerſality of the New Covenant or Law of Grace.*

I Mean the Promiſe of Remiſſion, Juſtification, Adoption and Salvation to All, ſo they will believe. No man on earth is excluded in the tenour of this Covenant: and therefore certainly you are not excluded: and if not excluded, then you muſt needs be included. Shew where you are excluded if you can! You will ſay, But for all this, All men are not Juſtified and ſaved: *Anſw.* True, becauſe they will not be perſwaded to Accept the Mercy that is freely given them.

The uſe that I would have you make of this, I will ſhew in the next.

DIRE-

DIRECTION. VII.

You must get the right understanding of the difference between General Grace and Special: and between the Possibility, Probability, Conditional certainty, and Absolute certainty of your Salvation: and so between the Comfort on the former ground, and on the later.

AND here I shall open to you a rich Mine of Consolation.

Understand therefore, that as every particular part of the house is built on the foundation, so is every part of Special Grace built on General Grace. Understand also, that all the four last mentioned particulars do belong to this General Grace: As also, that though no man can have Absolute Certainty of Salvation, from the consideration of this General Grace alone, yet may it afford abundance of relief to distressed souls, yea much true Consolation. Lastly, Understand, that All that hear the Gospel, may take part in this Consolation, though they have no Assurance of their Salvation at all, no nor any Special Saving Grace.

Now when you understand these things well, this is the Use that I would have you make of them.

1. Do not begin the way to your Spiritual Peace, by enquiring after the sincerity of your Graces, and trying your selves by Signs: Do not seek out for Assurance of Salvation in the first place; nor do not look

look and ſtudy after the ſpecial Comforts which come from certainty of ſpecial Grace, before you have learned, 1. To perform the Duty, 2. And to Receive the Comforts which General Grace affordeth. Such immethodical diſorderly proceedings, keepeth thouſands of poor ignorant Chriſtians in darkneſs and trouble almoſt all their dayes. Let the firſt thing you do, be to obey the voice of the Goſpel, which calleth you to Accept of Chriſt and ſpecial Mercy: *This is the Record, that God hath given us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son: He that hath the Son hath life.* Fix this deep in your mind; that the nature of the Goſpel is firſt to declare to our underſtandings the moſt gracious Nature, undertakings and performances of Chriſt for us (which muſt be believed to be true:) And 2. To offer this Chriſt with all his ſpecial Mercy to every man to whom this Goſpel comes, and to Intreat them to Accept Chriſt and Life, which is freely given and offered to them. Remember then, You are a loſt ſinner: for certain Chriſt and Life in him is given and offered to you. Now your firſt work is, Preſently to accept it; not to make an unſeaſonable enquiry, Whether Chriſt be yours? but to Take him that he may be yours. If you were Condemned, and a Pardon were freely given you, on Condition you would Thankfully take it, and it were offered to you, and you intreated to take it; what would you do in this Caſe? would you ſpend your time and thoughts in ſearching whether this Pardon be already yours? or would you not preſently Take it that it may be yours? Or if you were ready to famiſh, and food were offered you; would you ſtand asking firſt, How ſhall I know that it is mine? or rather Take and Eat it, when you are ſure it may be yours if you will.

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Let me intreat you therefore, when the devil clamours in your ears [Christ and Salvation is none of thine,] suppose that this voice of God in the Gospel were still in your ears, yea let it be still in your memory [O Take Christ, and Life in him, that thou maist be saved:] still think that you hear *Paul* following you with these words [*We are Embassadours for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christs stead, be Reconciled to God.*] Will you but remember this, when you are on your knees in sorrow; and when you would fain have Christ and Life, and you are afraid that God will not give them to you? I say, Remember then, God stands by Beseeching you to accept the same thing which you are Beseeching him to give. God is the first suitor and solicitor: God prayes you to Take Christ, and you Pray him to give you Christ: what have you now to do, but to Take him? And here understand, that this Taking is no Impossible business; it is no more but your hearty *Consenting*, as I shall tell you more anon. If you did but well understand and consider, that Believing is the great Duty that God calls you to perform, and promiseth to save you if you do truly perform it; and that this believing is to Take, or Consent to have the same Mercy which you pray for, and are troubled for fear left you shall miss of it, even Christ and life in him; this would presently draw forth your Consent, and that in so open and express a way, as you could not but discover it, and have the comfort of it. Remember this then, That your first work is to Believe, or Accept an offered Saviour.

2. You must learn (as I told you,) to Receive the Comforts of Universal or General Grace, before you search after the Comforts of Special Grace. (I here

here ſuppoſe you ſo far ſound in the doctrine of the Goſpel, as neither with ſome on one hand, to look ſo much at Special Grace, as to deny that General Grace which is the Ground of it, or preſuppoſed to it: nor with others, ſo far to look at univerſal Mercy, as to deny Special.) Satan will tell you, that all your Duties have been done in hypocriſie, and you are unſound at the heart, and have not a drop of ſaving Grace: You are apt to entertain this, and conclude that all this is true: If I had any Grace, I ſhould have more Life, and Love and Delight in God; more tenderneſs of heart, more growth in Grace: I ſhould not carry about ſuch a Rock in my breaſt; ſuch a ſtupid, dull, inſenſible ſoul, *&c.*

At the preſent let us ſuppoſe that all this be true: yet ſee what a world of Comfort you may gather from Univerſal or General Mercy. I have before opened to you four parts of it in the Cauſe of your Happineſs, and three in the Effect, which may each of them afford much relief to your troubled ſoul.

1. Suppoſe you are yet Graceleſs, is it nothing to you that it is a God of Infinite Mercy, that you have to do with? whoſe Compaſſions are ten thouſand times greater than your deareſt friends, or your own husbands.

Obj. O but yet he will not ſave the Graceleſs?

Anſw. True: but he is the more ready to give Grace, that you may be ſaved. *If any of you* (mark, any of you) *do lack wiſdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally* (without deſert) *and upbraideth not* (with our unworthineſs or former faults) *and it ſhall be given him.* Jam. 1. 4. *If you that are evil can give good gifts to your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask it,* Luke 11. 13. Suppoſe your life

life were in the hands of your own husband, or your childrens life in your hands, would it not exceedingly comfort you or them, to consider, whose hands they are in? though yet you had no further Assurance how you should be used? It may be you will say, But God is no Father to the Graceless? I answer; He is not their Father in so near and strict a sense as he is the Father of Believers; but yet a Father he is even to the wicked; and to convince men of his Fatherly Mercy to them, he often so stileth himself. He saith by *Moses*, Deut. 32. 6. to a wicked generation, whose spot was not the spot of his children, *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?* And the Prodigal could call him *Father* for his encouragement before he returned to him, *Luke* 15. 16, 17, 18. For my own part, I must needs profess, that my soul hath more frequent support from the consideration of Gods Gracious and Merciful nature, than from the Promise it self.

2. Furthermore, Suppose you were Graceless at the present; yet is it not an exceeding Comfort, that there is one of such Infinite Compassions as the Lord Christ, who hath assumed our Nature, and is come down to seek and save that which was lost; and is more tender-hearted to poor sinners, than we can possibly conceive? yea, who hath made it his Office to Heal, and Relieve, and Restore, and Reconcile: Yea that hath himself endured such temptations as many of ours; *For we have not an high Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin: Let us therefore* (saith the holy Ghost) *come boldly unto the throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and*

and find Grace to help in time of need, Heb. 4. 15, 16. *Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part with them, that he might destroy through death, him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of Angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham: Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a Merciful and faithfull high-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the sins of the people: For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted,* Heb. 2. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. Have you discountenance from men? Christ had much more. Doth God seem to forsake you? so he did by Christ. Are you fain to lie on your knees crying for Mercy? why Christ in the dayes of his flesh was fain to offer up *strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save him: and was heard in that he feared.* It seems that Christ had distressing fears as well as you, though not sinful fears. Have you horrid temptations? why Christ was tempted to cast himself head-long, and to worship the Devil, for worldly preferment; Yea the Devil had power to carry his body up and down, to the pinacle of the Temple, and the top of a mountain. If he had such power of you, would you not think your self certainly his slave? I conclude therefore, as it is an exceeding ground of comfort to all the sick people in a City, to know that there is a most merciful and skilful Physitian, that is easily able to cure them, and hath undertaken to do it freely for all that will take him for their Physitian; so is it a ground of exceeding comfort to the worst of sinners, to all sinners (that are yet alive, and have not blasphemed

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the holy Ghoſt,) to know what a Merciful and ſufficient Saviour hath undertaken the work of mans Redemption.

3. Alſo, Suppoſe yet that you are Graceleſs; Is it nothing that a ſufficient Sacrifice and Ranſom is given for you? This is the very foundation of all ſolid Peace. I think this is a great comfort, to know that God looks now for no ſatisfaction at your hand; and that the Number or Greatneſs of your ſins, as ſuch, cannot now be your ruine. For certainly no man ſhall periſh for want of the payment of his Ranſom, or of an expiatory Sacrifice for Sin, but only for want of a willing heart to Accept him that hath freely Ranſomed them.

4. Alſo, Suppoſe you are Graceleſs; Is it nothing that God hath under his hand and ſeal made a full and free deed of Gift, to you and all ſinners, of Chriſt, and with him of pardon and ſalvation! and all this on Condition of your Acceptance or Conſent? I know the Deſpiſers of Chriſt ſhall be miſerable for all this; But for you that would fain have Chriſt, is it no comfort to know that you ſhall have him if you will? and to find this to be the ſumm of the Goſpel? I know you have often read thoſe free offers, *Rev.* 22.17. *Whoſoever will, let him take of the water of life freely: Ho every one that thirſteth, come and drink*, &c. Almoſt all that I have hitherto ſaid to you, is compriſed in that one text, *Joh.* 3.16. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

And as I have ſhewed it you in the Cauſes (what Comfort even General Mercy may afford) ſo let me a little ſhew it you in the Effects. I mean, not only in that God is now ſatisfied; but as to your ſelf and every ſinner, theſe three things are produced hereby.

1. There

1. There is now a Poſſibility of ſalvation to you. And certainly even that ſhould be a very great Comfort. I know you will meet with ſome Divines, who will tell you that this is no effect of Chriſt's death; and that elſe Chriſt ſhould die for God, if he procured him a Power to ſave which he had not before: But this is no better than a reproaching of our Redeemer. Suppoſe that a Traitor have ſo abuſed a King, that it will neither ſtand with his own Honour, nor Juſtice, nor Laws to pardon him; If his Compaſſion were ſo great, that his own Son ſhall ſuffer for him, that ſo the King might be capable of pardoning him, without any diminution of his Honour or Juſtice; were it not a vile reproach, if this Traitor ſhould tell the Prince that ſuffered for him [It was for your Father that you ſuffered to procure him a Power of Pardoning: it was not for me.] It's true, the King could not pardon him, without ſatisfaction to his Honour and Juſtice. But this was not through any Impotency: but becauſe the thing was not fit to be done: and ſo was Morally Impoſſible. For in Law we ſay, Diſhoneſt things are Impoſſible. And it had been no leſs to the King if the Traitor had not been pardoned. So it is in our Caſe. And therefore Chriſt's ſufferings could not be more eminently for us, than by enabling the offended Majeſty to forgive us; and ſo taking the greateſt impediment out of the way: for when impediments are once removed, God's Nature is ſo Gracious and prone to Mercy, that he would ſoon pardon us when once it is fit to be done, and ſo morally poſſible in the fulleſt ſenſe; only mens own unwillingneſs now ſtands in the way, and makes it to be not fully fit to be yet done. It's true, in a remote ſenſe the Pardon of ſin was alway Poſſible; but in the neereſt ſenſe it was Impoſſible,

till Christ made it Possible by his Satisfaction.

2. Nay, though you were yet Graceless, you have now this Comfort, that your Salvation is Probable as well as Possible. You are very fair for it. The terms be not hard in themselves, on whith it is tendered. For Christ's yoak is easie, and his burden light, and his Commands are not grievous. *The word is nigh you*, even the offer of Grace: you need not say, *Who shall ascend to Heaven, or go down to Hell?* Rom. 10. But this will appear in the next.

3. Yea, this exceeding Comfort there is, even for them that are Graceless, that their Salvation is *Conditionally Certain*, and the Condition is but their *own willingness*. They may all have Christ and Life if they will. Now I desire you in all your Doubts, that you will well consider and improve this one Truth and Ground of Comfort. Would you, in the midst of your groans, and complaints, and fears, take it for a small mercy, to be certain that you shall have Christ if you will? when you are praying for Christ in fear and anguish of spirit, if an Angel or voice from Heaven should say to you [It shall be unto thee according to thy will; If thou wilt have Christ and Life in him, thou shalt:] would this be no Comfort to you? would it not revive you, and overcome your fears?

By this time I hope you see what abundance of Comfort General Mercies of Grace may afford the soul, before it perceive (yea or receive) any Special Grace (though few of those that receive not Special Grace can make much use of General, yet it is propounded to them as well as others.)

1. All the terrifying Temptations which are grounded on mis-representations of God (as if he were a cruel destroyer to be fled from.) are dispelled by the

the due conſideration of his Goodneſs, and the deep ſettled apprehenſions of his Gracious, Merciful, Lovely Nature (which indeed is the firſt work of true Religion, and the very maſter Radical Act of true Grace, and the chief maintainer of ſpiritual Life and Motion.)

2. All theſe Temptations are yet more effectually diſpelled by conſidering this Merciful Divine Nature dwelling in fleſh, becoming man, by condeſcending to the Aſſumption of our humane Nature; and ſo come near us, and aſſuming the Office of being the Mediatour, the Redeemer, the Saviour of the world.

3. All your doubts and fears that proceed from your former ſins, whether of youth or of age, of ignorance or of knowledge, and thoſe which proceed from your Legal unworthineſs; have all a preſent Remedy in the fulneſs and ſufficiency of Chriſt's ſatisfaction, even for all the world; ſo that no ſin (except the excepted ſin) is ſo great, but it is fully ſatisfied for; and though you are unworthy, yet Chriſt is worthy; and he came into the world to ſave only the unworthy (in the ſtrict and Legal ſenſe.)

4. All your doubts and fears that ariſe from an apprehenſion of God's *unwillingneſs* to ſhew you Mercy, and to give you Chriſt and Life in him, ariſe from the miſapprehenſions of Chriſt's *unwillingneſs* to be *yours*; or at leaſt from the uncertainty of his willingneſs; theſe have all a ſufficient Remedy in the general extent and tenour of the New Covenant. Can you doubt whether God be willing to give you Chriſt and Life, when he had given them already? even by a Deed of Gift under his hand, and by a Law of Grace, 1 *Joh.* 5. 10, 11, 12.

Object. But yet all are not Pardoned, nor poſſeſſed of Chriſt, and ſo ſaved.

Anſw. I told you, that is becauſe they *will* not; ſo that (I pray you mark it well) God hath in theſe four Means before mentioned; given even to the graceleſs ſo much ground of Comfort, that nothing but [their unwillingneſs to have Chriſt,] is left to be their terrour. For though ſin be not Actually Remitted to them, yet is it Conditionally Remitted, *viz.* if they will but accept of Chriſt offered them. Will you remember this, when your doubts are greateſt, and you conclude, that certainly Chriſt is not yours, becauſe you have no true grace; Suppoſe it be true; Yet ſtill know, that Chriſt may be yours if you will, and when you will. This Comfort you may have when you can find no Evidences of true grace in your ſelf. So much for that Direction.

DIRECTION VIII.

8. The next thing that you have to do, for building up a ſtable Comfort, and ſettling your Conſcience in a ſolid Peace, is this, *Be ſure to get and keep a right Underſtanding of the Nature of Saving Faith.*

AS you muſt have right thoughts of the Covenant of Grace (of which before) the want thereof doth puzzle and confound very many Chriſtians; ſo you muſt be ſure to have right thoughts of the Condition of the Covenant. For indeed that Grace which cauſeth you to perform this Condition, is your firſt ſpecial ſaving Grace, which you may take as a certain evidence of your Juſtification: And this Condition is the very link which conjoineth all

all the general foregoing Grace to all the reſt of the following ſpecial Grace. *The Scripture is ſo full and plain in Aſſuring Pardon and Salvation to all true Believers, that if you can but be ſure that you are a Believer, you need not make any doubt of your intereſt in Chriſt, and your ſalvation.* Seeing therefore that all the queſtion will be, Whether you have true Faith? Whether you do perform the Condition of the new Covenant? (For all other doubts God hath given you ſufficient ground to reſolve, as is ſaid) how much then doth it concern you to have a right underſtanding of the Nature of this Faith? Which that you may have, let me tell you briefly what it is. Man's ſoul hath two faculties, Underſtanding and Will: Accordingly the Objects of man's ſoul (all Beings which it is to Receive) have two Modifications; Truth and Goodneſs (as thoſe to be avoided are evil.) Accordingly God's Word or Goſpel hath two parts; the Revelation of Truth, and the Offer and Promiſe of ſome Good. This offered Good is principally and immediately Chriſt himſelf to be joyned to us by Covenant, as our head and huſband: The ſecondary Conſequential Good, is Pardon, Juſtification, Reconciliation, Adoption, further Sanctification and Glorification, which are all offered with Chriſt. By this you may ſee what ſaving Faith is: It is firſt a Believing that the Goſpel is True; and then an Accepting of Chriſt therein offered to us, with his benefits: or a conſenting that he be ours, and we be his; which is nothing but a *true willingneſs to have an offered Chriſt.* Remember this well; that you may make uſe of it, when you are in doubt of the truth of your Faith. Thouſands of poor ſouls have been in the dark, and unable to ſee themſelves to be Believers, meerly for want of knowing

what ſaving Faith is. The Papiſts place almoſt all in the meer Aſſent of the Underſtanding. Some of our Reformers made it to be either an Aſſurance of the pardon of our own ſins; or a ſtrong perſwaſion of their pardon, excluding doubting; or (the moderateſt) a perſwaſion of our particular pardon, though mixt with ſome doubting: The Antinomians ſtrike in with them, and ſay the ſame: Hence ſome Divines conclude that Juſtification and Remiſſion go before Faith, becauſe the act doth alway ſuppoſe its object: For they thought that Remiſſion already paſt, was the object of Juſtifying Faith: ſuppoſeing Faith to be nothing elſe but a Belief that we are pardoned: Yea ordinarily, it hath been taught in the writings of our greateſt refuters of the Papiſts, That this Belief is properly a Divine Faith, or the Belief of a Divine Teſtimony, as is the Believing of any Propoſition written in the Scripture (a foul errour, which I have confuted in my book of *Reſt, Part* 3. *Chap.* 7.) Moſt of late have come nearer the truth, and affirmed Juſtifying Faith to conſiſt in Affiance, or Recumbency, or Reſting on Chriſt for ſalvation. No doubt this is one Act of Juſtifying Faith, but not that which a poor troubled ſoul ſhould firſt ſearch after and try it ſelf by (except by *Affiance*, any ſhould mean as *Ameſius* doth, *Election of Chriſt*: and then it is the ſame Act which I am aſſerting: but very unfitly expreſt.) For 1. Affiance is not the Principal Act, nor that wherein the very life of Juſtifying Faith doth conſiſt: but only an imperate allowing act, and an effect of the vital act (which is Conſent, or Willing, or Accepting Chriſt offered:) for it lieth mainly in that which we call the ſenſitive part, or the Paſſions of the ſoul. 2. It is therefore leſs conſtant, and ſo unfitter to try

by:

by: For many a poor ſoul that knows it ſelf unfeignedly willing to have Chriſt, yet feeleth not a Reſting on him, or Truſting in him, and therefore cries out, O I cannot believe; and think they have no Faith. For Recumbency, Affiance, or Reſting on Chriſt, implieth that caſing of themſelves, or caſting off their fears, or doubts, or cares, which true believers do not alwaies find. Many a poor ſoul complains, O I cannot reſt on Chriſt; I cannot truſt him! who yet would have him to be their Lord and Saviour, and can eaſily be convinced of their willingneſs. 3. Beſides, Affiance is not the Adequate act of Faith, ſuited to the object in that fulneſs as it muſt be Received: but Willingneſs or Acceptance is, Chriſt is Reſted on only for our ſelves as our Deliverer, but he is accepted alſo for himſelf as our Lord and Maſter. The full proof of theſe, I have performed in other Writings, and oft in your hearing in publick, and therefore omit them now. Be ſure then to fix this truth deep in your mind. That Juſtifying Faith is not an Aſſurance of our Juſtification, no nor a perſwaſion or belief that we are juſtified or pardoned, or that Chriſt died more for us than for others; nor yet is Affiance or Reſting on Chriſt the vital, principal, certain conſtant full act; but it is the Underſtandings belief of the truth of the Goſpel, and the Wills Acceptance of Chriſt and Life offered to us therein; which Acceptance is but the hearty Conſent or Willingneſs that he be yours, and you his. This is the Faith which muſt juſtifie and ſave you.

Object. But 1. May not wicked men be Willing to have Chriſt? 2. And do not you oft tell us that Juſtifying faith comprehends Love to Chriſt and Thankfulneſs, and that it receiveth him as a Lord to

be obeyed, as well as a Deliverer? and that Repentance and ſincere Obedience, are parts of the Condition of the new Covenant?

Anſw. I will give as brief a touch now on theſe as may be, becauſe I have handled them in fitter places. 1. Wicked men are willing to have Remiſſion, Juſtification, and freedom from Hell (for no man can be willing to be unpardoned, or to be damned;) But they are not willing to have Chriſt himſelf in that nature and office which he muſt be Accepted; that is, *As an holy Head and Husband to ſave them both from the Guilt, and Power, and all defilement and abode of ſin, and to Rule them by his Law, and Guide them by his Spirit, and to make them happy by bringing them to God, that being without ſin, they may be perfectly Pleaſing and Amiable in his ſight, and enjoy him for ever.* Thus is Chriſt offered, and thus to be accepted of all that will be ſaved; and thus no wicked man will accept him (but when he ceaſeth to be wicked.) 2. (To cut all the reſt ſhort in a word, I ſay, That) in this fore-deſcribed Willingneſs or Acceptance, Repentance, Love, Thankfulneſs, Reſolution to obey are all contained, or neerly implied, as I have elſewhere manifeſted; ſo that the Heart of ſaving Faith, is this Acceptance of Chriſt, or Willingneſs to have him to Juſtifie, Sanctifie, Guide and Govern you. Find but this Willingneſs, and you find all the reſt, whether you expreſly ſee them or not. So much for that Direction.

DIRECTION

DIRECTION IX.

9. **Having thus far proceeded, in diſcovering and improving the General Grounds of Comfort, and then in diſcovering the Nature of Faith, which gives you Right to the ſpecial Mercies of the Covenant, following it; Your next work muſt be,** ***To perform this Condition by Actual Believing.***

YOur ſoul ſtands in extream need of a Saviour: God offereth you a Saviour in the Goſpel: what then have you next to do, but Accept him? Believe that this offer is general, and therefore to you: and that Chriſt is not ſet to ſale, nor doth God require you to bring a Price in your hand: but only heartily and thankfully to Accept of what he freely giveth you. This muſt be done before you fall on trying your Graces to get Aſſurance: for you muſt have Grace, before you can diſcover it: and this is the firſt proper ſpecial ſaving Grace (as it comprizeth that knowledge and aſſent which neceſſarily go before it.) This is not only the method for thoſe that yet never believed, but alſo for them that have loſt the ſenſe of their faith, and ſo the ſight of their evidence. Believe again, that you may know you do believe; or at leaſt may poſſeſs an Accepted Saviour. When God in the Goſpel bids you, Take Jeſus Chriſt, and beſeecheth you to be reconciled to him; what will you ſay to him? If your heart anſwer, *Lord I am willing,*

willing, I will accept of Christ and be thankful: why then the match is made between Christ and you: and the marriage-Covenant is truly entred, which none can dissolve. If Christ were not first willing, he would not be the suitor, and make the motion: and if he be willing, and you be willing, what can break the match? If you will say, *I cannot believe*, if you understand what you say, either you mean that you cannot believe the Gospel is true; or else that you cannot be willing that Christ should be yours. If it be the former, and speak truly, then you are a flat Infidel (yet many temptations to doubt of the truth of Scripture, a true believer may have, yea and actual doubtings; but his faith prevaileth and is victorious over them:) But if you really doubt whether the Gospel be true, use Gods means for the discovery of its truth. Read what I have written in the second part of my book of *Rest*: I will undertake now more confidently than ever I did, to prove the truth of Scripture by plain, full undeniable force of Reason. But I suppose this is none of your case. If therefore when you say, that you cannot believe, you mean, that you cannot Accept an offered Christ, or be willing to have him; then I demand, 1. What is your reason? the Will is lead by the Reason of the Understanding. If you be not willing, there is something that perswades you to be unwilling. This Reason must be from something real, or else upon a mistake, upon supposal of something that is not in being. If it be upon mistake, either it is that you be not convinced of Christs willingness to be yours; and if you thought he did consent, you would consent willingly; If this be it, you do truly believe while you think you do not; for you do consent (and that's all on your part to make the match)

match) and Chriſt doth certainly conſent, though you do not underſtand it: In this caſe it concerneth you, to underſtand better the extent of the new Covenant, and then you will be paſt doubt of the wilingneſs of Chriſt, and ſee that whereever the match breaks, it is only for want of conſent in men; for Chriſt is the firſt ſuitor, and hath long ago in the Covenant proclaimed his conſent, to be the Head and Husband of every ſinner, on condition they will but conſent to be his.

If your miſtake be from any falſe apprehenſion of the Nature of Chriſt, as if he were not a ſufficient Saviour, or were ſuch an enemy to your comfort, that he would do you more hurt than good; if theſe miſtakes are prevalent, then you do not know Chriſt, and therefore muſt preſently better ſtudy him in the Goſpel, till you have prevailed over ſuch ignorant and blaſphemous conceits (but none of this I ſuppoſe is your caſe.)

If then the reaſon why you ſay, you cannot believe, be from any thing that is really in Chriſt (and not upon miſtake) then it muſt be either from ſome diſlike of his ſaving work, by which he would pardon you, and ſave you from damnation (but that is impoſſible, for you cannot be willing to be damned or unpardoned, till you loſe your Reaſon:) Or elſe it is from a diſlike of his work of ſanctification, by which he would cleanſe your heart and life, by ſaveing you from your ſinful nature and actions; ſome grudgings againſt Chriſts holy and undefiled Laws and wales will be in the beſt, while there is that fleſh in them which luſteth againſt the Spirit, ſo that they cannot do the things they would: But if truly you have ſuch a diſlike of a ſinleſs condition, through the love of any ſin or creature, that you cannot be willing

willing to have Chriſt to cure you and cleanſe you from that ſin, and make you holy: I ſay, if this be true, in a prevailing degree, ſo that if Chriſt and Holineſs were offered you, you would not Accept them, then it is certain you have not true faith. And in this caſe it is eaſily to diſcern, that your firſt work lieth not in getting Comfort or eaſe to your troubled mind, but in getting better conceits of Chriſt and a holy ſtate and life, that ſo you may be willing of Chriſt, as Chriſt is of you, and ſo become a true Believer. And here I would not leave you at that loſs as ſome do, as if there were nothing for you to do for the getting of faith: for certainly God hath preſcribed you Means for that end. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God preached, Rom.* 10. 17. 1. Therefore ſee that you wait diligently on this Ordinance of God. Read the Scriptures daily, and ſearch them, to ſee whether you may not there find that Holineſs is better than ſin. 2. And (however ſome ſeducers may tell you, that wicked men ought not to pray, yet) be ſure that you lie on your knees before God, and importunately beg that he would open your eyes, and change your heart, and ſhew you ſo far the evil of ſin, and the want and worth of Chriſt and holineſs, that you may be unfeignedly glad to Accept his offer.

Object. But the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.

Anſw. 1. You muſt diſtinguiſh between wicked men, as actually wicked, and going on in the proſecution of their wickedneſs; and wicked men, as they have ſome good in them, or are doing ſome good, or are attempting a return to God. 2. You muſt diſtinguiſh between real Prayer and ſeeming prayer. 3. You muſt diſtinguiſh between full Acceptance of

Prayer,

Prayer, when God delighteth in them, and an Acceptance only to ſome particular end, not imitating the Acceptance of the perſon with his Prayer: And between Acceptance fully promiſed (as certain) and Acceptance but half promiſed (as Probable:) and upon theſe diſtinctions I ſhall anſwer your objections in the Concluſion.

1. When wicked men pray God to proſper them in their wickedneſs, yea or to pardon them while they intend to go on in it, and ſo to give them an indulgence in ſin; or when they think with a few prayers for ſome Good, which they can endure, to put by that Holineſs which they cannot endure, and ſo to make a cloak for their rebellion; theſe prayers are all an abomination to the Lord.

2. When men uſe the words of a Prayer without the deſire of the thing asked, this is no Prayer, but equivocally ſo called, as a carkaſs is a man: and therefore no wonder if God abhor that Prayer, which truly is no Prayer.

3. God hath not made a full promiſe, aſcertaining any wicked man, while wicked, that he will hear his Prayer: for all ſuch Promiſes are made to Believers.

4. God doth never ſo hear an unbelievers Prayer, as to accept his perſon with his Prayer, or to take a complacency in them. So much for the Negative.

Now for the Affirmative I add: 1. Prayer is a duty which God enjoyned even wicked men (I could prove it by an hundred Scripture texts.)

2. There may be ſome good deſires in unbelievers, which they may expreſs in Prayer, and theſe God may ſo far hear as to grant them, as he did in part to *Ahab*.

3. An unbeliever may lie under preparing Grace, and

and be on his way in returning towards God, though yet he be not come to ſaving faith; and in this ſtate he may have many good deſires, and ſuch Prayers as God will hear.

4. Though God have not flatly engaged himſelf to unbelievers, ſo as to give them a certainty of hearing their prayers, and giving them true grace on the improvement of their naturals, yet he hath not only appointed them this and other means to get grace, but alſo given them half promiſes, or ſtrong probabilities of ſpeeding, ſo much as may be a ſufficient encouragement to any ſuch ſinner to call on God, and uſe his Means. For as he appointeth not any vain Means to man, ſo no man can name that man who did improve his naturals to the utmoſt, and in particular, ſought God in prayer, ſo far as a natural man may do, who yet miſt of grace, and was rejected (This is the true mean between Pelagianiſm and Antinomianiſm in this point.)

5. When God calls unbelievers to Prayer, he withall calls them to Believe: and when he works their heart to Prayer by that call, he uſually withall works them to Believe, or at leaſt towards believing. If he that was unwilling to have Chriſt, do pray God to make him willing, it is a beginning of willingneſs already, and the way to get more willingneſs. In Prayer God uſeth to give in the thing prayed for, of this kind.

6. Prayer is the ſouls motion Godward: and to ſay an unbeliever ſhould not pray, is to ſay he ſhould not turn to God: who yet ſaith to the wicked, *Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forſake his way, &c. Iſa.* 55. 6, 7.

7. Prayer hath two parts, Deſire is the ſoul of it, and Expreſſion is the body: the ſoul can live ſeparated from

from the body, but ſo cannot the body ſeparated from the ſoul: ſo can Deſire without Expreſſion, but not Expreſſion without Deſire. When our blind Antinomians (the great ſubverters of the Goſpel, more than the Law) do rail againſt Miniſters for perſwading wicked men to pray, they are againſt us for perſwading men to Deſire that they pray for: Prayer having Deſire for its ſoul. And do not thoſe men deſerve to be exterminated the Churches and Societies of the Saints, who dare ſay to a wicked unbeliever, *Deſire not Faith: Deſire not to leave thy wickedneſs: Deſire not Grace, or Chriſt, or God*: and that will proclaim abroad the world (as I have oft heard them with zealous reproaches) that our Miniſters are Legaliſts, Seducers, Ignorant of the Myſteries of the Goſpel, becauſe they perſwade poor ſinners to pray for Faith, Grace and Chriſt; that is, to Deſire theſe, and to expreſs their Deſires; which in effect is to perſwade them to Repent, Believe and turn to God. Indeed, if theſe blind Seducers had ever heard our Miniſters perſwading wicked men to Diſſemble and lie to God, and ask faith, grace and Chriſt with their tongues, but not Deſire them in their hearts, then had they ſufficient grounds for their reviling language (but I have been too long on this.) I may therefore boldly conclude, that they that find themſelves unbelievers, that is, unwilling to have Chriſt to deliver them from ſin, muſt uſe this ſecond Means to get faith, even earneſt frequent Prayer for it to God.

3. Let ſuch alſo ſee that they avoid wicked ſeducing company and occaſions of ſin: and be ſure that they keep company with men fearing God, eſpecially joyning with them in their holy duties.

4. Laſtly, Let ſuch be ſure that they uſe that Reaſon which God hath given them, to conſider frequently, retiredly,

retiredly, ſeriouſly of the vanity of all thoſe things that ſteal away their hearts from Chriſt; and of the excellency of Holineſs, and how bleſſed a ſtate it is, to have nothing in us in heart or life that is diſpleaſing to God, but to be ſuch as he taketh full delight in; alſo of the certainty of the damnation of unbelievers, and the intollerableneſs of their torments; and of the certainty and unconceivable greatneſs of Believers everlaſting Happineſs. If wicked unbelievers would but do what they can in daily, ſerious, deep conſidering of theſe things, and the like, they would have no cauſe to deſpair of obtaining Faith and Sanctification. Believing is a Rational Act: God bids you not to Believe any thing without Reaſon, nor to Accept or Conſent to any thing without full Reaſon to cauſe you to conſent. Think then often and ſoberly of thoſe Reaſons that ſhould move you to Conſent, and of the vanity of theſe that hinder you from Conſenting, and this is God's way for you to obtain Faith or Conſent.

Remember then, that when you have underſtood and improved general grounds of Comfort (nay before you can come to any full improvement of them) your next buſineſs is to Believe: to Conſent to the Match with Chriſt, and to take him for your Lord and Saviour: And this duty muſt be lookt to and performed, before you look after Special Comfort. But I ſaid ſomewhat of this before under the ſixth Head, and therefore will ſay no more now.

DIRECTION

DIRECTION X.

10. When you have gone thus far, your Soul is ſafe, and you are paſt your greateſt Dangers, though yet you are not paſt your Fears: Your next work therefore for Peace and Comfort is this, *To review and take Notice of your own Faith, and thence to gather Aſſurance of the Certainty of your Juſtification, and Adoption, and right to Glory.*

THe ſumme of this Direction lyeth in theſe things:

1. See that you do not content your ſelf with the forementioned general Comforts, without looking after Aſſurance and ſpecial Comforts. The folly of this I have manifeſted in the third part of my book of Reſt, about ſelf-examination.

2. See that you dream not of finding Aſſurance and ſpecial Comfort from meer general Grounds: This is the deluſion of many Antinomians, and of moſt of our prophane people (who I find are commonly of the Antinomian faith naturally, without teaching) For men to conclude that they ſhall certainly be ſaved, meerly becauſe God is Merciful, or Chriſt is tender-hearted to ſinners, and would not that any ſhould periſh, but all ſhould come to Repentance, or becauſe God delights not in the death of him that dyeth, but rather that he Repent and live: or becauſe Chriſt dyed for them; or becauſe

God hath given Christ and Life in the Gospel to all on Condition of believing; these are all but meer deluſions. Much Comfort, as I have ſhewed you, may be gathered from theſe Generals: but no Certainty of Salvation, or ſpecial Comfort can be gathered from them alone.

3. See that you reject the Antinomian doctrine or dotage, which would teach you to reject the tryal and judging of your ſtate by ſigns of Grace in your ſelf, and tell you that it is only the Spirit that muſt Aſſure, by witneſſing your Adoption, I will further explain this caution when I have added the reſt.

4. And on the other extream, do not run to Marks *unſeaſonably*, but in the order here laid down.

5. Nor do not truſt to unſafe Marks.

6. And therefore do not look at too many; for the true ones are but few. I do but name theſe things to you, becauſe I have fullier handled them in my book of Reſt, whither I muſt refer you. And ſo I return to the third Caution.

I have in the forementioned Book told you, what the Office of the Spirit is in Aſſuring us, and what the uſe of Marks are. The Spirit witneſſeth firſt Objectively, and ſo the Spirit and Marks are all one. For it is the Spirit dwelling in us that is the witneſs or proof that we are Gods ſons: for he that hath not his Spirit is none of his: and the Spirit is not diſcerned by us in its eſſence, but in its workings: and therefore to diſcern theſe workings, is to diſcern the Spirit: and theſe workings are the Marks that we ſpeak of: ſo that the Spirit witneſſeth our Sonſhip, as a reaſonable ſoul witneſſeth that you are a man and not a beaſt. You find by the Acts of Reaſon that you have a Reaſonable ſoul, and then you know, that having a Reaſonable ſoul, you are certainly a man: So

you

you find by the works or fruits of the Spirit, that you have the Spirit, (that is, by Marks: and *Paul* enumerates the fruits of the Spirit to that end) and then by finding that you have the Spirit, you may certainly know that you are the child of God. 2. Alſo, as the Reaſonable ſoul is its own diſcerner by the help of the body (while it is in it) and ſo witneſſeth our Humanity effectively as well as objectively (but firſt in order objectively, and next effectively;) ſo doth the Spirit effectively diſcover it ſelf to the ſoul, by illuminating us to diſcern it, and exciting us to ſearch, and giving us that ſpiritual taſte and feeling of its workings, and ſo of its preſence, by which it is beſt known. But ſtill it witneſſeth objectively firſt, and its effective witneſſing, is but the cauſing us to diſcern its objective witneſs. Or (to ſpeak more plainly,) The Spirit witneſſes firſt and principally by giving us thoſe Graces and workings which are our Marks; and then ſecondly by helping us to find and feel thoſe workings or marks in our ſelves; and then laſtly by raiſing Comforts in the ſoul upon that diſcovery. Take heed therefore of expecting any ſuch inward witneſs of the Spirit, as ſome expect, *viz.* a diſcovery of your Adoption directly, without firſt diſcovering the ſigns of it within you; as if by an inward voice he ſhould ſay to you, Thou art a child of God, and thy ſins are pardoned.

This that I deſcribed to you, is the true witneſs of the Spirit. This miſtake is ſo dangerous, that I had thought to have made it a peculiar Direction by itſelf to warn you of it: and now I have gone ſo far, I will diſpatch it here. Two dangerous conſequents I find do follow this unwarrantable expectation of the firſt immediate efficient Revelation that we are Adopted.

1. Some poor ſouls have languiſhed in doubtings and trouble of mind almoſt all their dayes, in expectation of ſuch a kind of witneſs as the Spirit uſeth not to give: when in the mean time they have other ſufficient means of Comfort, and knew not how to improve them; yea they had the true witneſs of the Spirit in his inhabitation and holy workings, and did not know it; but run as *Samuel* did to *Eli*, not knowing the voice of God: and look for the Spirits teſtimony when they had it, as the Jews for *Elias* and the Meſſias.

2. Others do more dangerouſly err, by taking the ſtrong conceit of their own phantaſie for the witneſs of the Spirit, as ſoon as they do but entertain the opinion that it muſt be ſuch a witneſs of the Spirit, without the uſe of Marks, that muſt aſſure men of their Adoption, preſently they are confident that they have that witneſs themſelves. It is ſcarce likely to be Gods Spirit that is ſo ready upon the meer change of an opinion: The devil uſeth to do as much to cheriſh preſumption, as to deſtroy true faith and Aſſurance. It is a ſhrewd ſign that our perſwaſions of our truth of Grace is a deluſion, when we find the devil a friend to it, and helping it on: and it is a probable ſign it is a good perſwaſion, when we find the devil an enemy to it, and ſtill troubling us, and endeavouring our diſquiet.

And here I remember the ſcruple that troubleth ſome about the ſpirit of bondage, and the ſpirit of Adoption. But you muſt underſtand that by the ſpirit of bondage, is meant that ſpirit, and thoſe operations on the ſoul which the Law of Works did naturally beget in thoſe that were under it; which was, to be partly in bondage to a task of Ceremonious duties, and partly to the Curſe, and obligation to

Puniſhment

Punishment for disobedience, without any Power to Justifie; They were said therefore to be in bondage to the Law; and the Law was said to be a Yoak which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, *Acts* 15.

And by the spirit of Adoption is meant, 1. That spirit, or those qualifications and workings in their souls, which by the Gospel God giveth only to his sons. 2. And which raise in us some child-like affections to God, inclining us in all our wants to run to him in Prayer as to a Father, and to make our moan to him, and open our griefs, and cry for redress, and look to him, and depend on him as a child on the father. This spirit of Adoption you may have, and yet not be certain of Gods special Love to you. The knowledge only of his general Goodness and Mercy, may be a means to raise in you true child-like affections. You may know God to have fatherly inclinations to you, and yet doubt whether he will use you as a child, for want of assurance of your own sincerity. And you may hope God is your father, when yet you may apprehend him to be a displeased angry father, and so he may be more your terrour than your comfort. Are not you ready in most of your fears, and doubts, and troubles, to go to God before all other for relief? and doth not your heart sigh and groan to him when you can scarcely speak? Doth not your troubled spirit there find its first vent? and say, *Lord, kill me not: forsake me not: my life is in thy hands: O soften this hard heart, make this carnal mind more spiritual! O be not such a stranger to my soul! Wo to me that I am so ignorant of thee! so disaffected to thee! so backward and disinclined to holy communion with thee! Wo to me that I can take no more pleasure in thee! and am so mindless and disregardful*

of thee! O that thou wouldst stir up in me more livel y defires, and workings of my soul towards thee! and suffer me not to lye at such a distance from thee. Are not such as these the breathings of your spirit! why these are child-like breathings after God! this is crying *Abba Father*. This is the work of the spirit of Adoption, even when you fear God will cast you off. You much mistake (and those that tell you so) if you think that the spirit of Adoption lyeth only in a perswasion that you are Gods Child, or that you may not have the spirit of Adoption without such a perswasion of Gods Adopting you. For God may Adopt you, and give you that spirit which he gives only to his children, and possess you with true filial affections towards him, before ever you know your self to be Adopted; much more, though you may have frequent returning doubts of your Adoption.

Having thus shewed you how far you may expect the Witness of the Spirit, and how far you may and must make use of Marks, and Qualifications, or Actions of your own, for the obtaining of Assurance and setled Peace, I shall add an Answer to the Principal Objections of the Antinomians against this.

Object. (They say) This is to draw men from Christ to themselves, and from the Gospel to the Law: to lay their Comforts, and build their Peace upon any thing in themselves, is to forsake Christ and make themselves their own Saviours: and those Teachers that perswade them to this, are Teachers of the Law, and false Prophets, who draw men from Christ to themselves. All our own Righteousness is as a menstruous cloth, and our best works are sin, and therefore we may not take up our Assurance or Comforts from them. We shall be alwayes at uncertainties, and at a loss, or unconstant, up and down

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in our Comforts, as long as we take them from any ſigns in our ſelves. Alſo our own Graces are Imperfect, and therefore unfit to be the Evidences for our Aſſurance.

Anſw. Becauſe I am not now purpoſely confuting the Antinomians, but only fore-arming you againſt their aſſaults; I ſhall not therefore give you half that I ſhould otherwiſe ſay, for the Explication of this Point, and the Confutation of their Errors; but only ſo much as is neceſſary to your preſervation. Which I do, becauſe they pretend to be the only Preachers of free Grace, and the only right Comforters of troubled Conſciences; and becauſe they have written ſo many books to that end, which if they fall into your hands may ſeem ſo ſpecious, as that you may need ſome preſervative. I ſuppoſe you remember what I have taught you ſo oft, concerning the difference of the Law of Works, and the Law or Covenant of Grace, with their different Conditions. Upon which ſuppoſition I explicate the point thus. 1. No man may look at his own Graces or Duties as his Legal Righteouſneſs; that is, ſuch as for which the Law of Works will pronounce him Righteous. 2. Nor yet may he take them for part of his Legal Righteouſneſs, in conjunction with Chriſts Righteouſneſs, as the other part; but here we muſt go wholly out of our ſelves, and deny and diſclaim all ſuch righteouſneſs of our own. We have no Works which make the Reward to be not of Grace, but of Debt. 3. We muſt not once think that our Graces, Duties or ſufferings, can make ſatisfaction to Gods Juſtice for our ſin and unrighteouſneſs: nor yet that they are any part of that ſatisfaction. Here we aſcribe all to Chriſt, who is the only Sacrifice and Ranſome. 4. Nor muſt we think that our Duties or Graces

are properly Meritorious; this also is to be left as the sole honour of Christ. 5. Yet that we may and must raise our Assurance and Comforts from our own Graces and Duties, shall appear in these clear Reasons following, which shew also the Grounds on which we may do it.

1. Pardon, Justification and Adoption, and Salvation, are all given to us in the Gospel only Conditionally (if we believe:) and the Condition is an act, or rather several acts of our own. Now till the Condition be performed, no man can have any Certainty that the Benefit shall be his, nor can he by any other means (ordinarily) be certain of the Benefit, but by that which ascertains him that he hath performed the condition. God saith, *He that believeth shall be saved*: No man can know then that he shall be saved till he first know that he Believeth. Else he should know either contrary to that which is written, or more than that which is written: And Justification and Adoption should be given some other way than by the Gospel Promise (for that Promise giveth them only Conditionally, and so suspendeth the actual right, upon the performance of the Condition:) But if any can shew any other way, by which God maketh over pardon and Adoption, besides the Gospel promise, let them do it; but I will not promise suddenly to believe them; for it was never yet shewed as I know of. Also, if men must not look at their own performance of the Condition, to prove their right to the benefit, then either all or none must believe that they have that right. For the Promise saith, *He that believeth shall be saved*. And this is a promise of Life conditionally to all. If all must believe that they shall be saved, than most of the world must believe a lye. If the true believer may not

therefore

therefore conclude that he ſhall be ſaved, becauſe he performeth the condition of the Promiſe, then no man may believe it. And for that abſolute Promiſe of the new Heart, no man can, or may believe that it is his, till he have that new heart which it promiſeth: that is, till it be fulfilled: For there is no Mark by which a man can know whether that Promiſe belong to him or no, before-hand: and if all ſhould believe that it belongs to them, moſt would find it falſe.

2. God hath not redeemed us by his Son to be Lawleſs: To be without Law is to be without Government. We are without *the Law* (that is, of Works, or of *Moſes*) but not without *Law*; Jeſus Chriſt is our Ruler, and he hath made us a Law of Grace; an eaſie yoak, and commands that are not grievous. This Law hath Precepts, Promiſes and Threats: it muſt needs be either obeyed or diſobeyed; and ſo the penalty muſt be due or not due; and the reward due or not due. He that performs the condition, and ſo to whom the reward is due, and not the penalty, is Righteous in the ſenſe of this Law. As when we are accuſed to be ſinners againſt the Law of Works, and ſo to deſerve the penalty of that Law, we muſt confeſs all, and plead the Righteouſneſs of Chriſts ſatisfaction, for our Juſtification: ſo when we are accuſed to be final unbelievers or impenitent, and ſo not to have performed the conditions of the new Covenant, we muſt be Juſtified by our own Faith and Repentance, the performance of that condition; and muſt plead, Not guilty: And ſo far our own Acts are our Evangelical Righteouſneſs, and that of ſuch neceſſity, that without it no man can have part in Chriſts Righteouſneſs, nor be ſaved. I would deſire any man elſe to tell me, what elſe he will plead at Judgement,

Judgement, when the Accuſer chargeth him (or if he do ſo charge him) with final unbelief: will he confeſs it, and ſay, *Chriſt hath Believed and Repented for me?* that is as much as to ſay, *Chriſt was a Believer for Infidels, that he might ſave Infidels.* All falſe. If he will not ſay thus (and lying will do no good) then muſt he plead his own Believing and Repenting as his Righteouſneſs in oppoſition to that Accuſation. And if it be of ſuch uſe then, and be called an hundred times in Scripture, *our Righteouſneſs*, and we Righteous for it, then doubtleſs we may accordingly try by it now, whether we ſhall then be able to come off and be juſtified, or no; and ſo may build our comfort on it.

3. Conſcience is a Witneſs and Judge within us; and doth, as under God, Accuſe and Condemn, or Excuſe and Acquit: Now if Conſcience muſt abſolve us only ſo far as we are Innocent, or do well, or are qualified with Grace; then it is impoſſible but theſe our Qualifications and Actions ſhould be ſome ground of our Comfort. See *Acts* 24. 16. and 23. 1. *Rom.* 2. 15, 16.

4. Thoſe which are our Graces and Works, as we are the Subjects and Agents, are the Graces and Works of God, of Chriſt, of the holy Ghoſt dwelling in us. If therefore we may not rejoyce in our own Works, or graces, then we may not rejoyce in the Works or Gifts of God, Chriſt or the holy Ghoſt. And,

5. Our Graces are the ſpiritual Life or Health of the ſoul, and our holy actions are the vital operations. Now Life and Health are neceſſary: Rejoycing, delighting things of themſelves: and vital Actions are neceſſarily pleaſant and delectable.

6. Our Graces and holy Actions muſt needs Rejoyce

joyce us in reſpect of their Objects. For the object of our Love, Truſt, Hope, Meditation, Prayer, Conference, &c. is God himſelf, and the Lord Jeſus, and the Joyes of Heaven. And how can ſuch Actions chooſe but Rejoyce us!

7. Yea Rejoycing it ſelf, and Delighting our ſelves in God, is not only one part of our Duty, but that great Duty wherein lyeth the height of our Chriſtianity: And how vain a ſpeech is it to ſay, that we may not take up our Comforts from our own works, nor Rejoyce in any thing of our own: when even Rejoycing it ſelf, and Delighting, and Comforting our ſelves is one part of our Duty?

8. As God in Chriſt is the chief object and ground of our Comfort (ſo that we muſt Rejoyce in nothing but God, and the Croſs of Chriſt, in that kind, or in co-ordination with them,) ſo it is the office of every Grace and holy Work, and Ordinance, and Means, to be ſubſervient to Chriſt, either for the attaining of Chriſt, or applying his merits, or they are the effects of his merits. Now if we muſt Love and rejoyce in Chriſt principally, then muſt we needs love and rejoyce in all thoſe things that ſtand in a neceſſary ſubordination to him, in their places. And therefore to ſay, *We muſt Rejoyce in Chriſt only, and therefore not in any Graces or Duties of our own*, is as wiſe, as if a wife ſhould caſt her husbands cloaths and meat out of doors, and ſay, You charged me to admit none into my chamber but your ſelf: Or as if a Phyſitian, having told his patients, *I will cure you, if you will truſt me only for the cure*: thereupon the Patients ſhould caſt away his Medicines, and ſhut the doors againſt his ſervants and Apothecary, and ſay, *We muſt truſt none but the Phyſitian.*

9. All the failings of our Duties are pardoned, and they

they Accepted in Christ; and therefore we may Rejoyce in them.

10. Our Duties have a double tendency to our salvation: 1. As the Condition to which God hath promised it as the Crown and Reward (in an hundred texts of Scripture;) and may we not Comfort our selves in that which God promiseth Heaven to? 2. As a Natural means to our obedience and further perfection (as Watchfulness, Meditation, &c. tend to destroy sin:) as *Paul* saith to *Timothy*, *Take heed to thy self, and to thy Doctrine, and in so doing thou shalt both save thy self, and them that hear thee*, 1 Tim. 4. 16. and may we not take Comfort in that which tends to save our own and our brethrens souls?

11. We shall be Judged according to our Works: therefore we must judge our selves according to our Works; and so must judge our state good or bad according to our works: for can man judge by a righter way than God will? at least is it not lawful for man to judge as God doth?

12. We must judge of others in probability, according to their external works, even the tree by the fruits; therefore we must judge of our selves in certainty, according to our internal and external works together (which we may certainly know.)

13. If we may not Rejoyce in any of our Graces, then we may not be Thankful for them, for Thanks is accompanied with Joy: but we must be Thankful.

14. If we may not Rejoyce in our Duties, we may not Repent or sorrow for the neglect of them; and if we may not Rejoyce in our Graces, we may not Lament the want of them (for these are as the two ends of the ballance, that one goes down when the other goes up; or as day and night, light and darkness) But the consequent is intollerable.

15. This

15. This would overthrow all Religion. For what a man cannot Rejoyce in, he cannot Love, he cannot eſteem, regard, be careful to obtain, be fearful of loſing, *&c.*

16. God delighteth in our Graces and holy Duties, and is well pleaſed with them: and therefore it is lawful and needful that we do as God doth, *Jer.* 9. 24. *Heb.* 11. 5. *Abels* ſacrifice by faith obtained teſtimony that he pleaſed God, *Heb.* 13. 16. *To do good and to communicate forget not, for with ſuch ſacrifice God is well pleaſed.*

17. The Saints of God have not only tryed themſelves by their Graces and Duties, and commanded others to try by them, but have gloried and Rejoyced in their Duties and ſufferings, 2 Cor. 1. 12. *This is our Rejoycing, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have had our converſation among you.* Acts 5. 41. *They gloried that they were counted worthy to ſuffer for Chriſt.* Rom. 15. 17. *I have therefore whereof I may glory in Jeſus Chriſt, in thoſe things which pertain to God.* Rom. 5. 3. *We glory in tribulation,* &c. 2 *Cor.* 12, 6, 9. *Though I ſhould deſire to glory, I ſhould not be a fool: I glory in mine infirmities.* Jer. 9. 24. *Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me,* 1 Cor. 9. 15. *I had rather dye than any ſhould make my glorying void,* Gal 6. 4. *Let every man prove his own work, ſo ſhall he have Rejoycing in himſelf alone, and not in another.*

18. Scripture nameth many of our own Graces and Duties, as the certain Marks of our Juſtification and right to glory: Even Chriſt with his own mouth gives us many: Mat. 6. 21. *Where your treaſure is, there will your heart be alſo,* Joh. 3. 20. *He that doth evil hateth the light,* &c. *but he that doth good cometh*

to

to the light, that, &c. Mat. 5. is full of ſuch. *Bleſſed are the Poor in ſpirit, the pure in heart, &c.*

19. We may Rejoyce in other mens good Works and Graces (and do, if we be true Chriſtians,) therefore in our own.

20. We may Rejoyce in Gods outward Mercies; therefore much more in inward, and ſuch as accompany ſalvation. All theſe Arguments prove that we may take up our Comfort from our own Gracious Qualifications and Actions (not in oppoſition to Chriſt, but in ſubordination to him:) and moſt of them prove that we may fetch our Aſſurance of Salvation from them, as undoubted Evidences thereof.

I have ſaid the more in Anſwer to theſe Objections, 1. Becauſe never any came with fairer pretences of exalting Chriſt, and maintaining the honour of his Righteouſneſs and free Grace, and of denying our ſelves and our own Righteouſneſs. 2. And yet few Doctrines more diſhonour Chriſt, and deſtroy the very ſubſtance of all Religion. Even as if a man ſhould cry down him that would Praiſe and commend Obedience to the King, and ſay, You muſt Praiſe nothing but the King: ſo do theſe cry down our looking at, and Rejoycing in our Love to Chriſt, and our Thankfulneſs to him, and our Obedience, and all under pretence of honouring him. Nay they will not have us Rejoyce in one part of Chriſts ſalvation (his ſaving us from the power of ſin, and his ſanctifying us,) under pretence that we diſhonour the other part of his ſalvation (his Juſtifying us.) If ever Satan transformed himſelf into an Angel of Light, and his Miniſters into Miniſters of Light, it is in the miſtakes of the Antinomians: and no people in the world (except carnal Libertines, whom this Doctrine fits to a hair) are in more danger of them,

them, than poor doubting Chriſtians under trouble of Conſcience: eſpecially if they be not judicious, and skilled in the Doctrine of Chriſt. For the very pretence of extolling Chriſt and free Grace will take much with ſuch: and any New-way will ſometime ſeem to give them Comfort, upon the very novelty and ſudden change.

Having thus proved that you may and muſt fetch your ſpecial Comfort and Aſſurance from Evidences, and that your firſt Evidence is your Faith; I ſhall open this fullier under the next Direction.

DIRECTION XI.

11. In the Tryal of your State, *Be ſure that you make uſe of Infallible ſigns of Sincerity, and take not thoſe for certain which are not.*

AND to that end remember what I ſaid before, that you muſt well underſtand wherein the Nature of ſaving Faith, and ſo of all ſaving Grace doth conſiſt. And when you underſtand this, write it down in two or three lines: and both at your firſt tryal, and afterward, when ever any doubts do drive you to a Review of your Evidence, ſtill have recourſe only to thoſe Signs, and try by them. What theſe Signs are, I have ſhewed you ſo fully in the fore-cited place in my book of *Reſt*, that I ſhall ſay but little now. Remember that Infallible ſigns are very few: and that whoſoever is made the condition of ſalvation, that is the moſt Infallible evidence of our ſalvation, and therefore the fitteſt Mark to

try

try by: And therefore Faith in God the Father and the Redeemer, is the main Evidence. But because I have elsewhere shewed you, that this Faith is comprehensive of Love, Gratitude, Resolution to Obey, and Repentance; let me more particularly open it to help you in the Tryal. To prove any Grace to be saving, it is necessary that you prove that salvation is fully promised to him that hath it. Now if you will know what it is that hath this Promise; I will tell you, 1. As to the Object. 2. The Act. 3. The degree or modification of the Act. For all these three must be enquired after, if you will get Assurance. 1. The Object is principally God and the Redeemer Christ: And secondarily the Benefits given by Christ: and under that, the means to attain the principal Benefits, *&c.* 2. The Act hath many Names drawn from Respective and Modal differences in the Object; as Faith, Desire, Love, Chooſing, Accepting, Receiving, Consenting, *&c.* But properly all are comprized in one word, *Willing*. The Understandings high estimation of God, and Christ, and Grace, is a Principal part of true saving Grace: but yet it is difficult, and scarce possible to judge of your self by it rightly, but only as it discovers it self by prevailing with the Will. 3. The Degree of this Act must be such, as ordinarily prevaileth against its contrary: I mean, both the contrary Object, and the contrary Act to the same Object. But because I doubt School-terms do obscure my meaning to you: (though they are necessary for exactness) I will express the nature of saving grace in two or three Marks as plain as I can.

1. *Are you heartily willing to take God for your Portion, and had you rather Live with him in Glory, in his favour and fullest Love, with a soul perfectly*

fectly cleanſed from all ſin, and never more to offend him, Rejoycing with his Saints in his everlaſting praiſes: than to enjoy the delights of the fleſh on earth, in a way of ſin, and without the favour of God.

2. *Are you heartily willing to take Jeſus Chriſt as he is offered in the Goſpel? that is, to be your only Saviour, and Lord, to give you pardon by his bloodſhed, and to ſanctifie you by his Word and Spirit, and to govern you by his Laws?*

(Becauſe this General containeth and implieth ſeveral Particulars, I will expreſs them diſtinctly.)

Here it is ſuppoſed that you know this much following of the nature of his Laws: For to be willing to be Ruled by his Laws in general, and utterly unwilling when it comes to Particulars, is no true Willingneſs or ſubjection. 1. You muſt know that his Laws reach both to heart and outward actions. 2. That they command a holy, ſpiritual, heavenly life. 3. That they command things ſo croſs and unpleaſing to the fleſh, that the fleſh will be ſtill murmuring and ſtriving againſt obedience: Particularly, 1. They command things quite croſs to the *inclinations* of the fleſh: as to forgive Wrongs, to Love Enemies, to forbear malice and Revenge, to reſtrain and mortifie Luſt and Paſſion: to abhor and mortifie Pride, and be low in our own eyes, and humble and meek in ſpirit. 2. They command things that croſs the *intereſt* of the fleſh and its inclination both together: I mean which will deprive it of its enjoyments, and bring it to ſome ſuffering: As to perform Duties even when they lay us open to diſgrace and ſhame, and reproach in the world; and to deny our credit, rather than forſake Chriſt or our duty: to obey Chriſt in doing what he commandeth us, though it would hazard or certainly loſe our

wealth, friends, liberty, and life it self; forsaking all rather than to forsake him: to give to the poor, and other good uses, and that liberally, according to our abilities: to deny the flesh all forbidden pleasures, and make not provision to satisfie its lusts, but to crucifie the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof: and in this combate to hold on to the end, and to overcome. These are the Laws of Christ, which you must know, before you can determine whether you are indeed unfeignedly willing to obey them. Put therefore these further questions to your self; for the trial of your willingness to be Ruled by Christ according to his Laws.

3. *Are you heartily willing to live in the performance of those holy and spiritual Duties of heart and life which God hath absolutely commanded you? and are you heartily sorry that you perform them no better? with no more chearfulness, delight, success and constancy?*

4. *Are you so throughly convinced of the worth of everlasting Happiness, and the intollerableness of everlasting misery, and the truth of both, and of the Soveraignty of God the Father, and Christ the Redeemer, and your many engagements to him, and of the necessity and good of obeying, and the evil of sinning; that you are truly willing, that is, have a settled resolution to cleave to Christ, and obey him in the deareſt, most disgraceful, painful, hazardous, flesh-displeasing Duties; even though it should cost you the loss of all your worldly enjoyments, and your life?*

5. *Doth this willingness or resolution already so far prevail in your heart and life, against all the Interest and Temptations of the world, the devil, and your flesh, that you do ordinarily practise the*

most

moſt ſtrict and holy, the moſt ſelf-denying, coſtly and hazardous duties that you know God requireth of you, and do heartily ſtrive againſt all known ſin, and overcome all groſs ſins; and when you fall under any prevailing temptation, do riſe again by repentance, and begging pardon of God through the blood of Chriſt, do reſolve to watch and reſiſt more carefully for the time to come.

In theſe five Marks is expreſſed the Goſpel-deſcription of a true Chriſtian.

Having laid down theſe Marks, I muſt needs add a few words for the explaining of ſome things in them, leſt you miſtake the meaning, and ſo loſe the benefit of them.

1. Obſerve that it is your *willingneſs* which is the very Point to be tried. And therefore 1. Judge not by your bare knowledge. 2. Judge not by the ſtirings or paſſionate workings of your Affections. I pray you forget not this Rule in any of your ſelf-examinings: It is the heart that God requireth: *My Son, give me thy heart, Prov.* 23. 26. If he hath the Will, he hath the heart. He may have much of our Knowledge, and not our heart: but when we know him ſo thoroughly as to Will him unfeignedly, then he hath our heart. Affectionate workings of ſoul to God in Chriſt, are ſweet things, and high and noble Duties, and ſuch as all Chriſtians ſhould ſtrive for: But they are not the faſeſt Marks to try our ſtates by: 1. Becauſe there may be a ſolid, ſincere intention and choice in and of the Will, where there is little ſtirring perceived in the Affections. 2. Becauſe the Will is the Maſter, Commanding Faculty of the Rational ſoul; and ſo if it be right, that man is upright and ſafe. 3. Becauſe the Paſſions and Affections are ſo mutable and uncertain:

certain: The Will can command them but imperfectly; it cannot perfectly Restrain them from vanities: much less can it perfectly raise them to that height, as is suitable to the excellency of our heavenly objects. But the object it self, with its sensible manner of apprehension moves them more than all the Command of the Will. And so we find by experience, that a godly man, when with his utmost private endeavour he cannot command one stirring pang of divine Love or Joy in his soul, yet upon the hearing of some moving Sermon, or the sudden receiving of some extraordinary Mercy, or the reading of some quickning book, he shall feel perhaps some stirring of that Affection. So when we cannot weep in private one tear for sin, yet at a stirring Sermon, or when we give vent to our sorrows, and ease our troubled hearts into the bosom of some faithful friend, then we can find tears. 4. Because Passions and Affections depend so much on the temperature of the Body: To one they are easie, familiar and at command: to another (as honest) they are difficult and scarce stirred at all. With most women, and persons of weaker tempers, they are easier than with men. Some cannot weep at the death of a friend, though never so dear, no nor perhaps feel very sensible inward grief; and yet perhaps would have redeemed his life at a far dearer rate (had it been possible) than those that can grieve and weep more abundantly. 5. Because Worldly things have so great an advantage on our Passions and Affections. 1. They are sensible and near us, and our knowledge of them is clear: But God is not to be seen, heard or felt by our senses: he is far from us, though locally present with us: we are capable of knowing but little, very little of him. 2. Earthly things are *alway* before our eyes, their advantage

vantage is continual. 3. Earthly things being ſtill the objects of our ſenſes, do force our Paſſions, whether we will or not: though they cannot force our Wills. 6. Becauſe Affections and Paſſions riſe and fall, and neither are nor can be in any even and conſtant frame: and therefore are unfit to be the conſtant or certain evidence of our ſtate; But the Wills Reſolution and Choice may be more conſtant. So that I adviſe you rather to try your ſelf by your Will, than by your Paſſionate ſtirrings of Love, or longing, of joy or ſorrow.

Object. But doth not the Scripture lay as much on Love, as on any Grace? and doth not Chriſt ſay, that except we love him above all, we cannot be his Diſciples?

Anſw. Its all very true. But conſider, Love hath two parts; the one in the Will, which is commonly called a faculty of the ſoul, as Rational; and this is the ſame thing that I call *Willing*, Accepting, Chuſing or Conſenting: this Complacency is true Love to Chriſt; and this is the ſure ſtanding Mark. The other is the Paſſionate part, commonly ſaid to be in the ſoul, as ſenſitive; and this, though moſt commonly called Love, yet is leſs certain and conſtant, and ſo unfitter to try your ſtate by, though a great duty, ſo far as we can reach it.

2. You muſt underſtand and well remember, that it is not every *willingneſs* that will prove your ſincerity. For wicked men may have ſlight apprehenſions of ſpiritual things, which may produce ſome ſlight deſires and wiſhes, which yet are ſo feeble and heartleſs, that every luſt and carnal deſire overcomes them: and it will not ſo much as enable them to deny the groſſeſt ſin. But it muſt be the Prevalent part of your Will that God muſt have: I mean a greater

ſhare, a deeper and larger room than any thing in the world. That is, you muſt have a higher eſtimation of God, and everlaſting happineſs, and Chriſt, and a holy life, than of any thing in the world: and alſo your will muſt be ſo diſpoſed hereby, and inclined to God, that if God and Glory to be obtained through Chriſt by a holy ſelf-denying life, were ſet before you on the one hand; and the Pleaſure, Profits and Honours of the world to be enjoyed in a way of ſin, on the other hand; you would reſolvedly take the former, and refuſe the latter: Indeed they are thus ſet before you: and upon your choice dependeth your ſalvation or damnation (though that choice muſt come from the Grace of God.)

3. Yet muſt you well remember, that this Willingneſs and choice is ſtill imperfect: and therefore when I mention *a hearty willingneſs*, I mean not *a perfect willingneſs*. There may be, and is in the moſt gracious ſouls on earth, much indiſpoſedneſs, backwardneſs, and withdrawing of heart, which is too great a meaſure of unwillingneſs to duty. Eſpecially to thoſe duties which the fleſh is moſt averſe from, and which require moſt of God and his Spirit to the right performance of them.

Among all Duties, I think the ſoul is naturally moſt backward to theſe following; 1. To ſecret prayer: becauſe it is ſpiritual, and requires great reverence, and hath nothing of external pomp or form to take us up with and conſiſteth not much in the exerciſe of common gifts, but in the exerciſe of ſpecial Grace, and the breathings of the Spirit, and ſearchings, pantings, and ſtrivings of a gracious ſoul towards God. (I do not ſpeak of the heartleſs repeating of bare words, learned by rote, and either not underſtood, or not uttered from the feeling of the ſoul.)

2. To

2. To ſerious Meditation, alſo is the ſoul very backward: that is either to meditate on God, and the promiſed Glory, or any ſpiritual ſubject, to this end that the heart may be thereby quickned and raiſed, and graces exerciſed (though to meditate on the ſame ſubject, only to know or diſpute on it, the heart is nothing near ſo backward.) Or elſe to meditate on the ſtate of our own hearts, by way of ſelf-examination, or ſelf-judging, or ſelf-reprehenſion, or ſelf-exciting. 3. Alſo to the Duty of faithful dealing with each others ſouls, in ſecret reproof and exhortation, plainly (though lovingly) to tell each other of our ſins and danger, to this the heart is uſually very backward; partly through a ſinful baſhfulneſs, partly for want of more believing lively apprehenſions of our duty and our brothers danger, and partly becauſe we are loth to diſpleaſe men and loſe their favour; it being grown ſo common for men to fall out with thoſe (if not hate them) that deal plainly and faithfully with them. 4. Alſo to Take a reproof, as well as to Give it, the heart is very backward: Even godly men (through the ſad remainders of their ſinfulneſs) do too commonly frown, and ſnarl, and retort our reproofs, and ſtudy preſently how to excuſe themſelves, and put it by, or how to charge us with ſomething that may ſtop our mouths, and make the Reprover ſeem as bad as themſelves: Though they dare not tread our reproofs under feet, and turn again, and all to rent us, yet they oft ſhew the remnants of a dogged nature, though when they review their waies it coſts them ſorrow. We muſt ſugar and butter our words, & make them liker to ſtroaking than ſtriking, liker an approving than a reproving them, like a flattery than faithful dealing, and yet when we have all done, they go down very hardly, and that but half

way, even with many godly people when they are under a temptation. 5. The like may be ſaid of all thoſe Duties which do pinch upon our credit or profit, or tend to diſgrace us, or impoveriſh us in the world; As the confeſſing of a Diſgraceful fault: the free Giving to the poor or ſacred uſes, according to our eſtates: the parting with our own Right or gain for Peace: the Patient ſuffering of wrong, and forgiving it heartily: and loving bitter abuſive enemies: eſpecially the running upon the ſtream of mens diſpleaſure, and incurring the danger of being utterly undone in our worldly ſtate (eſpecially if men be rich who do therefore as hardly get to Heaven as a Camel through a needles eye:) and above all, the laying down of our lives for Chriſt: It cannot be expected, that godly men ſhould perform all theſe with perfect Willingneſs: The fleſh will play its part, in pleading its own cauſe, and will ſtrive hard to maintain its own intereſt: O the ſhifts, the ſubtil Arguments, or at leaſt the clamorous and importunate contradictions that all theſe duties will meet with in the beſt, ſo far as they are renewed, and their Graces weak! ſo that you may well hence conclude that you are a ſinner, but you may not conclude that you are graceleſs, becauſe of a backwardneſs, and ſome unwillingneſs to Duty.

Yet your willingneſs muſt be greater than your unwillingneſs; and ſo Chriſt muſt have the prevailing part of your will; and from that the denomination is uſually taken: ſo that Scripture uſeth to affirm Gods people to be willing, even when they fail in the execution. So *Paul* Rom. 7. 18 ſaith, *To will is preſent with me, when how to do or perform be found not:* that is, not to obey ſo perfectly as he would do: not to love God ſo intenſly and fervently; not to ſubdue

due paſſions and luſts ſo throughly; not to watch our thoughts, and words, and waies ſo narrowly, and order them ſo exactly, as the bent of his will did conſent to. And leſt any Arminian ſhould pretend (as they do) that *Paul* ſpeaks here in the perſon of an unregenerate man, as under the convictions of the Law, and not as a man regenerate: it is plain in the text that he ſpeaks of himſelf in the ſtate which he was then in, and that ſtate was a regenerate ſtate: He expreſly ſaith, it is thus and thus with me; *So then I my ſelf with my mind do ſerve the Law of God, but with my fleſh the Law of ſin, verſ.* 25. And to put it out of doubt, the Apoſtle ſpeaks the like of all Chriſtians, *Gal.* 5. 17. *For the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh, and theſe are contrary the one to the other, ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* This is the plain Expoſition of *Rom.* 7. Here Scripture maketh the godly willing to do more than they do or can do: but yet it is not a perfect willingneſs, but it is the prevailing inclination and choice of the will, and that gives the name.

4. Obſerve further that I add your actual performance of Duty; becauſe true hearty Willingneſs will ſhew it ſelf in actions and endeavours. It is but diſſembling if I ſhould ſay, I am *willing* to perform the ſtricteſt holieſt Duties, and yet do not perform them. To ſay I am willing to pray, and pray not: or to give to the poor, and yet give not: or to perform the moſt ſelf-denying coſtly Duties, and yet when it ſhould come to the Practice, I will not be perſwaded or drawn to them. I will not confeſs a diſgraceful ſin, nor further a good Cauſe to my danger, coſt or trouble; nor reprove, nor ſubmit to reproof, nor turn from the way of temptations, or the like. Action muſt diſcover true Willingneſs. The ſon that ſaid to his father,

father, *I go Sir*, but went not to labour in the Vineyard, was not Accepted or Justified. If therefore you are in doubt whether your willingness be sincere, enquire into your practice and performance. God Commandeth you to Pray, to Instruct your family, to be merciful to the poor, to forgive those that wrong you, &c. The flesh and the Devil perswade you from these: Do you perform them, or do you not? Though you may do it with backwardness, and dulness, and weakness, yet do you Do it? and desire you could do it better? and lament your misdoing it? and *endeavour* to Do it better than you have formerly done? This shews then that the spirit prevaileth, though the flesh do contradict it.

5. Yet here you must carefully distinguish of Duties: For God hath made some to be secondary parts of the condition of the Covenant, and so of flat necessity for the continuance of our Justification, and for the attaining of Glorification: Such are confessing Christ before men when we are called to it; confessing sin; Praying; shewing Mercy to the poor; forgiving wrongs; hearing and yielding to Gods Word, &c. still supposing that there be opportunity and necessaries for the performance of these. But some duties there are that God hath not laid so great a stress or necessity on: though yet the wilful resolved omission in ordinary, of any known duty, is contrary to the nature of true Obedience.

Also, the Case may much differ with several persons, places and seasons, concerning Duty: that may be a duty to one man, that is not to another; and in one place, which is not in another; and at one season, which is not at another. And that may be a greater duty, and of indispensible necessity to one, which to another is not so great. It may stand with true

true Grace to omit that duty which men know not to be a duty, or not to be ſo to them (except where the duty is ſuch, as is it ſelf of abſolute neceſſity to ſalvation:) but it cannot ſo ſtand with Grace in thoſe that know it, ordinarily to reject it.

6. Alſo you muſt underſtand, that when I ſay, that true Willingneſs to be Ruled by Chriſt, will ſhew it ſelf in Actual Obedience; I do not mean it of every particular individual Act which is our duty, as if you ſhould judge your ſelf graceleſs for every particular omiſſion of a duty; no, though you knew it to be a duty: and though you conſidered it to be a duty. For 1. There may be a true Habituated Inclination and Willingneſs to obey Chriſt rooted in the heart, when yet by the force of a temptation, the actual prevalency of it at that time in that act may be hindered and ſuppreſt. 2. And at the ſame time, you do hold on in a courſe of obedience in other duties. 3. And when the temptation is overcome, and Grace hath been rowſed up againſt the fleſh, and you ſoberly recollect your thoughts, you will return to Obedience in that duty alſo. Yea how many daies, or weeks, or months, a true Chriſtian may poſſibly neglect a known duty, I will not dare to determine, (of which more anon.) Yet ſuch omiſſions as will not ſtand with a ſincere Reſolution and Willingneſs to obey Chriſt univerſally (I mean an Habitual Willingneſs) will not conſiſt with the truth of Grace.

7. I know the fourth Mark, about forſaking All for Chriſt, may ſeem ſomewhat unſeaſonable and harſh to propound for the quieting of a troubled conſcience. But yet, I durſt not omit it, ſeeing Chriſt hath not omitted it; nay, ſeeing he hath ſo urged it, and laid ſuch a ſtreſs on it in the Scriptures as he hath done; I dare not daub, nor be unfaithful, for fear of troubling:

troubling: such skinning over the wound will but prepare for more trouble, and a further cure. Christ thought it meet even to tell young beginners of the worst (though it might possibly discourage them, and did turn some back) that they might not come to him upon mistaken expectations; and he requireth all that will be Christians, and be saved, to count their cost before-hand, and reckon what it will stand them in to be Christs Disciples; and if they cannot undergo his terms (that is, to deny themselves, take up their cross, forsake all and follow him) they cannot be his Disciples. And Christ had rather they knew it before-hand, than to deceive themselves, or to turn back when they meet with what they never thought of, and then to imagine that Christ had deceived them, and drawn them in, and done the wrong.

8. When I say in the fourth Mark, that you must have *a settled resolution*, I mean the same thing as before I did by *hearty willingness*. But it is meeter here to call it *Resolution*, because this is the proper name for that act of the Will, which is *a determination of it self upon deliberation, after any wavering, to the doing or submitting to any thing as commanded.* I told you it must be the prevailing act of the Will that must prove you sincere: Every cold uneffectual wish will not serve turn. Christ seeks for your heart on one side, and the World with its pleasures, profits and honours on the other side: The soul which upon consideration of both, doth prefer Christ in his choice, and reject the world (as it is Competitor with him) and this not doubtingly, and with reservation for further deliberation or trial, but presently passeth his consent for better and worse, this is said to be a *Resolving*. And I know no one word that more fitly expresseth the nature of that grace which differenceth a true Christian from

from all hypocrites, and by which a man may ſafely judge of his eſtate.

9. Yet I here add, that it muſt be a *ſettled Reſolution*: And that to intimate, that it muſt be an Habituated Willingneſs or Reſolution. The Prevalency of Chriſts Intereſt in the ſoul muſt be an Habitual Prevalency. If a man that is terrified by a rowſing Sermon, or that lieth in expectation of preſent death, ſhould actually Reſolve to forſake ſin, or perform duty, without any further change of mind, or habit, or fixedneſs of this Reſolution, it would be of no great value, and ſoon extinguiſhed. Though yet I believe that no unſanctified man doth ever attain to that full Reſolution for Chriſt, which hath a complacency in Chriſt accompanying it, and which may be termed the Prevailing part of the Will: Thoſe that ſeem Reſolved to day to be for Chriſt, and to deny the world and the fleſh, and the next day are unreſolved again, have cauſe to ſuſpect that they were never truly reſolved. Though the will of a godly man may lie under declinings in the degrees of Reſolution, yet Chriſt hath alwaies his Habitual Reſolutions, and uſually his Actual in a prevalent degree.

10. I add alſo the Grounds (in the fourth Mark) on which this Reſolution muſt be raiſed: For falſe Grounds in the Underſtanding will not bear up a true Reſolution in the Will. And therefore we put the Articles of our Creed before our Profeſſion of Conſent and Obedience. Sound Doctrine and ſound Belief of it, breeds a ſound Reſolution, and makes a ſound heart and life. If a man reſolve to obey Chriſt, upon a conceit that Chriſt will never put him upon any ſuffering (elſe he would not reſolve it,) and that he will give him ſuch bruitiſh pleaſures when he is dead, as *Mahomet* hath promiſed to his Diſciples, this Reſolution

Reſolution were not ſound: yet in many leſſer points of Doctrine a true Chriſtian may be unſound, and yet ſoundly cleave to the foundation. He may build hay and ſtubble poſſibly: but the foundation muſt be held.

11. Obſerve well (leſt you miſtake me) that I ſpeak only of the Neceſſity of your preſent Reſolving to forſake all for Chriſt, if he call you to it; but I ſpeak not of your abſolute Promiſe or Prediction, that eventually you ſhall not deny or forſake him. You may be uncertain how you ſhall be upheld in a day of trial, and yet you may now be Reſolved or fully Purpoſed in your own mind what to do. To ſay, *I will not conſent, purpoſe or reſolve, unleſs I were certain to perform my Reſolutions, and not to flag or change again*; this is but to ſay, I will be no Chriſtian, unleſs I were ſure to perſevere. I will not be married to Chriſt, leſt I ſhould be drawn to break my Covenant with him.

12. Alſo obſerve, that when I ſpeak of your *Reſolving* to forſake all for Chriſt, it is not to caſt away your ſtate or life, but to ſubmit it to his diſpoſe, and to relinquiſh it only in caſe that he command you ſo.

13. And I do not intend that you ſhould be able thus to Reſolve of your ſelf without the ſpecial Grace of God; nor yet without it to continue thoſe Reſolutions: much leſs to perform them by actual ſuffering.

Object. But I cannot be ſure that God will give me grace to perſevere, or at leaſt not to deny him, as *Peter* did; and therefore I ſhould neither Promiſe nor Reſolve what I cannot be certain to perform?

Anſw. 1. I ſuppoſe you have read the many Scriptures

Scriptures and Arguments which our Divines ordinarily uſe to prove that the true Believers ſhall not fall quite away. And I know not how the oppoſers can anſwer that text which themſelves uſe to alledge for the contrary, *Mat.* 13. 6, 21. Thoſe that believe for a time, and in the time of perſecution fall away, it is becauſe the ſeed had not depth of earth, the word never took rooting in their hearts. Whence it ſeems that it may be well inferred, that thoſe ſhall not fall away in time of temptation, in whom the word of God hath taken deep rooting. And that is, in them *in whoſe hearts or wills Chriſt hath a ſtronger intereſt than the creature*, or *thoſe that have a well grounded, unreſerved, habituated or ſettled Reſolution to be for Chriſt.* 2. However, your preſent Reſolution, and your Covenanting with Chriſt is no more but this; to ſay, *I do Conſent; or this I am Reſolved to do, by the help of Gods Grace.* 3. Elſe no man ſhould be baptized or become a Chriſtian, becauſe he is uncertain to keep his Covenants: For all that are baptized, do covenant and vow, *to forſake the world, fleſh and devil, and fight under Chriſts banner to their lives end.* Underſtand me therefore, that you are not to promiſe to do this by your own ſtrength, but by the ſtrength of Chriſt, as knowing that he hath promiſed his Spirit and Grace for the aid of every true Believer.

14. If your Reſolution at preſent be hearty, you ought not to vex and diſquiet your mind with doubtful tormenting fears, what you ſhould do, if you be put to it, to forſake all, and ſuffer death for Chriſt. For he hath promiſed to lay no more on us than we can bear, but with the temptation will make us a way to come forth, 1*Cor.* 10. 13. either he will not bring us into trials beyond our ſtrength; or elſe he will increaſe

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our ſtrength according to our trials. He hath bid us pray, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:* and he hath promiſed, *that whatſoever we ask in the name of Chriſt according to his will, he will give us.* So that if once you can but truly ſay, that it is your full Reſolution to forſake all for Chriſt if he call you to it, and that on the forementioned grounds, you ought not then to vex your ſoul with fears of the iſſue: for that is but to diſtruſt God your Father and your Strength. Only you muſt be careful to do your duty to the keeping up of your preſent Reſolutions, and to wait obediently on God for the help of his Spirit, and to beg it earneſtly at his hands.

15. Much leſs is it lawful for men to feign and ſuppoſe ſuch calamities to themſelves, as God doth never try men by, and then to ask themſelves, Can I bear theſe for Chriſt? and ſo to try themſelves on falſe and dangerous grounds. Some uſe to be troubled leſt if they were put to long and exquiſite torments for Chriſt, they ſhould renounce him. One ſaith, I cannot endure the torments of Hell for Chriſt: Another ſaith, Could I endure to be roaſted, or torn in pieces ſo many weeks or daies together? or could I endure to die ſo many times over? Theſe are fooliſh ſinful queſtions, which Chriſt never deſired you to put to your ſelves. He never tries mens faith on this manner. Tormentors cannot go beyond his will. Nay it is but very few that he tries by death: and fewer by an extream tormenting death. All this therefore proceeds from errour.

16. Obſerve, from the fifth Mark, that the preſent Prevalency of your Reſolutions now againſt thoſe Temptations which you encounter with, may well encourage you to expect that they ſhould prevail hereafter, if God bring you into greater trials. Can you now

now follow Christ in a holy life, though your flesh repine, and would have its liberties and pleasures, and though the world deride or threaten you, or great ones turn against you and threaten your undoing? Can you part with your money to the poor, or to the promoting of any work of Christ, according to the measure of estate that God hath allotted you, notwithstanding all temptations to the contrary? Some trials you have now: if you can go well through these, you have no cause to disquiet your mind with fears of falling in greater trials. But he that cannot now deny his greedy Appetite in meats and drink, so far as to forbear excess; nor can deny his credit with men, nor bear the scorns or frowns of the world, but be on the stronger side, and decline his duty to avoid danger, what ever become of conscience or Gods favour, this man is not like to forsake and lay down his life for Christ and his cause.

Object. But though I break through lesser trials, I am not sure to overcome in greater, for the same measure of grace will not enable a man to forsake all, which will enable him to forsake a little. Many have gone through smaller trials, and after forsaken Christ in greater: And Christ makes it the property of temporaries that are not rooted in the faith, that they fall when tribulation and persecution for the Gospel ariseth: and therefore it seems they may stand till then: and if trial never come, they may never fall, and yet be unsound in the mean time?

Answ. 1. If your trial now be considerable, the truth of Grace may be manifested in it, though it be none of the greatest, and though in striving against sin you have not yet resisted unto blood. 2. If you carefully observe your own heart, you may discern whether the spirit and your resolutions be prevalent,

by their daily ſubduing and mortifying the fleſh and its luſts. Nay let me tell you, the Victory of Gods Spirit over the flattering, enticing world in proſperity, is a great and glorious, if not more, than that over the frowning, perſecuting world in adverſity. And therefore find the one, and you need not fear the other. Though I confeſs that hypocrites do not fall ſo vifibly and ſhamefully alwaies in proſperity as in adverſity: for they have more pretences, advantages and carnal ſhifts to hide the ſhame of their falls. And for that in the Parable in *Mat.* 13. I pray you mark one thing: Chriſt ſeems to ſpeak of every ſeveral ſort of Hearers by a Gradation, ſpeaking laſt of thoſe that go fartheſt. The firſt ſort are the common, ignorant, negligent Hearers, in whom the word takes no root at all. The ſecond ſort are thoſe that give it a ſlight and ſhallow rooting, but no deep rooting at all: theſe are they that fall away in tribulation. By *falling away*, is meant the plain deſerting Chriſt or the ſubſtance of his Cauſe. Theſe men till this falling away, though they profeſſed Chriſt, and heard the word with joy, yet no doubt did not crucifie the fleſh and the world: whereby they might have diſcovered their unſoundneſs if they would, before tribulation came: Firſt, by diſcerning that the Word was not deep rooted, 1. In their Judgement and Eſtimation; 2. Or in their Wills and ſetled Reſolution. Secondly, And by diſcerning the unmortified luſts of their hearts in the mean time. But it ſeems the third ſort of Hearers, likened to the *thorny ground*, went further than theſe: for here it is only ſaid by *Luk.* 8. 14. *That they bring no fruit to perfection*: However whether theſe went farther than the other, or not, it is certain that theſe alſo had their tryal, and fell in the tryal: The deceitfulneſs of riches

overturned

overturned theſe, as the heat of perſecution overturned the other. So that it is evident that proſperity puts faith to the tryal, as well as adverſity. But mark the different manner of their falls and overthrows: They that are overthrown by adverſity, are ſaid *to fall away*, that is, to forſake Chriſt openly: but they that fall by proſperity, are not ſaid to fall away; but only that the *deceitfulneſs of riches, and cares of the world choak the word, ſo that it becomes unfruitful, that is, brings no fruit to perfection.* For uſually theſe do not openly forſake Chriſt, but continue oft an unfruitful and hypocitical profeſſion: inſomuch that at that very time when the Word is choaked and fruitleſs, yet the blade of profeſſion may be as green as ever, and they may be ſo much in ſome duties, and have ſuch golden words, and witty ſhifts to plead for every covetous practice, and put ſo fair a gloſs on all their actions, that they may keep up the credit of being very eminent Chriſtians. So that if your Grace can carry you well through proſperity, you may be confident of the truth of it. 3. And then if it be thus proved true and ſaving, you have cauſe to be confident that it will hold out in adverſity alſo, and cauſe you to overcome the ſhake of tribulation. I think moſt men are better in adverſity than in proſperity: though I confeſs no adverſity is ſo ſhaking, as that which leaves it in a mans choice to come out of it by ſinning: As for a man in health to be perſecuted, and the perſecutor to ſay, If thou wilt turn to my ſide and way, I will give thee thy life and preferment with it: But ſickneſs or other ſufferings impoſed only by God, and which only God can take off, are nothing ſo ſhaking. For as the former draws us to pleaſe men, that they may deliver us; ſo this draws even the wicked to think of pleaſing God, that *He* may deliver them.

17. Obſerve that when I ask *whether this Reſolution do already prevail*, I do not mean any perfect prevailing: nay, ſin may prevail to draw you to a particular act (and how many, I will not undertake to tell you:) and yet ſtill Grace and the Spirit do conquer in the main. For you will ſay, that General and Army get the victory who vanquiſh the other, and win the field, though yet perhaps a Troop or Regiment may be routed, and many ſlain.

18. When I ſpeak of your *overcoming all groſs ſins*, as I mean in ordinary, not doubting but its too poſſible for a believer to commit a groſs ſin; ſo I confeſs that its hard to tell juſt which ſins are to be called groſs, and which infirmities only: or (as ſome ſpeak) which is mortal, and which not. And therefore this Mark hath ſome difficulties, as to the right trying by it (of which more anon.)

19. Yet I deſire that you joyn them all together in trial, ſeeing it is in the whole that the true and full deſcription of a Chriſtian is contained. The ſame deſcription of a true Chriſtian (preſuppoſing his right belief) I have drawn up in our publick Church-profeſſion, which in this County, the Miniſters have agreed on; in the Profeſſion of Conſent in theſe words; *I do heartily take this one God for my only God and chief good, and this Jeſus Chriſt for my only Lord-Redeemer, and Saviour, and this holy Ghoſt for my ſanctifier; and the Doctrine by him revealed and ſealed by his Miracles, and now contained in the holy Scriptures, do I take for the Law of God, and the Rule of my Faith and Life: And repenting unfeignedly of my ſins, I do reſolve through the Grace of God ſincerely to obey him, both in Holineſs to God, and Righteouſneſs to men, and in ſpecial Love to the Saints, and Communion with them, againſt all the Temptations of the Devil,*

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the world, and my own fleſh, and this to the death. He that ſincerely can ſpeak theſe words, is a ſincere Chriſtian.

20. Laſtly, That you may ſee that thoſe five which I laid you down are all true Marks, do but peruſe theſe texts of Scripture following. For the firſt, *Pſal.* 16, 5,2. & 73. 24,25,26,27,28. & 4.6,7. & 1,1,2,3. *Joſh.* 24. 16, 17, 18, 21, 22,24. *Mat.* 6. 19, 20, 21, *Rom.* 7. 24. and 8. 17, 18, 23. *Heb.* 11. 10,15,16,25, 26,27. *Pſal.* 16. 5, 6,7, 8. For the ſecond, ſee *John* 1. 10,11,12. *John* 3. 16. *Mark* 16. 16. *Acts* 16. 31. *John* 14. 21. & 16.27. *Rom.* 14. 9. *Luke* 16,27. *Jam.* 1.12. *Mat.* 22. 37. 1 *Cor.* 16. 22. *Mat.* 10.37. *Rev.* 22. 14. *Heb.* 5. 9. For the third, moſt of the ſame will ſerve: and *Heb.* 12.14. *Mat.* 7. 24. *Pſal.* 1.2,3. *Matth.* 5. 20. *Acts* 10. 35. *Rom.* 7. 22. For the two laſt, beſides the former, ſee *Heb.* 11. 6. *Rom.* 8. from the 1, to 14. *Gal.* 5. 17, 24. & 6. 8. 1 *Tim.* 6. 9. *Luke* 8. 13. 1 *John* 2. 15. & 5. 4, 5. *James* 1. 27. & 4. 4. *Gal.* 6. 14. & 1. 4. *Rom.* 12. 2. *Titus* 2. 14. *Matth.* 10.37. *Rom.* 2. 5, 6, 7. *Rev.* 14. 13. *Phil.* 2. 14. *Col.* 3. 23, 24. 1 *Cor.* 3. 8, 14. *John* 12. 16. 1 *John* 3.22,23. *Gen.* 22. 16. *Mat.* 10.22. & 24.13. *Heb.* 3.6,14. & 6.11. *Rev.* 2.26. 10. & 12. 11. *Mat.* 16.25. & 10. 39. *Mark* 17.33. *Rom.* 8. 9, 13. *Luke* 13.3, 5. *Rom.* 6.4, 5, 6, 12,14,16,17,22.

And thus I have given you ſuch Marks as you may ſafely try your ſelf by, and cleared the meaning of them to you. Now let me adviſe you to this uſe of them. 1. In your ſerious ſelf examination, try only by theſe, and not by any uncertain Marks. I know there be promiſes of Life made to ſome particular duties and ſingle qualifications in Scripture, as to Humility, Meekneſs, Alms-deeds, Love to the Godly, &c. but it is ſtill both on ſuppoſition that they be

not ſingle in the perſon, but are accompanied with, and flow from that faith and love to God beforementioned; and alſo that they are in a prevailing degree.

2. When ever any freſh doubtings ariſe in you upon the ſtirrings of corruption, or debility of Graces, ſtill have recourſe to theſe former marks; and while you find theſe, let not any thing cauſe you to paſs wrong Judgements on your ſelf. Lay theſe now to your own heart, and tell me, *Are you not unfeignedly willing to have Chriſt on the terms that he is offered? Are you not willing to be more holy? and beg of him to make you ſo? Would you not be glad if your ſoul were more perfectly ſanctified, and rid of that body of ſin, though it were to the ſmart and diſpleaſing of your fleſh? are you not willing to wait on God, in the uſe of his Ordinances, in that poor weak meaſure as you are able to perform them? Durſt you, or would you quit your part in God, Heaven, Chriſt, and forſake the way of Holineſs, and do as the profane world doth, though it were to pleaſe your fleſh, or ſave your ſtate or life? Do not you daily ſtrive againſt the fleſh and keep it under, and deny it its deſires? Do you not deny the world when it would hinder you from works of Mercy or publike Good, according to your ability? Is it not the grief of your ſoul when you fall? and your greateſt trouble that you cannot walk more obediently, innocently and fruitfully? and do you not after ſinning Reſolve to be more watchful for the time to come? Are you not reſolved to ſtick to Chriſt and his holy Laws and Waies, whatever changes or dangers come? and rather to forſake friends and all that you have, than to forſake him? Yet in a godly jealouſie and diſtruſt of your own heart, do renounce your own ſtrength, and reſolve to do this only in the ſtrength of Chriſt, and therefore daily beg it of him? Is it*

not

not your daily care and buſineſs to pleaſe God and do his will, and avoid ſinning in your weak meaſure? I hope that all this is ſo, and your own caſe; which if it be you have infallible Evidences, and want but the ſight and comfort of them: you have the true grounds for Aſſurance, though you want Aſſurance it ſelf; your chief danger is over, though your trouble remain. Your ſoul is at the preſent in a ſafe condition, though not in the ſenſe of it: You are in the ſtate of ſalvation, though not of conſolation. It muſt be your next work therefore to ſtudy Gods Mercies, and take notice what he hath done for your ſoul. Let not ſo bleſſed a gueſt as the holy Ghoſt dwell in you unobſerved. Shall he do ſuch wonders in you, and for you, and you not know it, or acknowledge it? Shall he new beget you, and new make you, and produce a ſpiritual, heavenly nature in you, who of your ſelf were ſo carnal and earthly, and will you not obſerve it? Had you any of theſe holy deſires, endeavours or reſolutions of your ſelf by nature? Or have the ungodly about you any of them? O that you knew what a work of wonderful Mercy, Wiſdom and Power the Spirit performeth in the renewing of a ſoul? then ſure you would more obſerve and admire his Love to you herein!

Direction XII.

12. The next Rule for your Direction for the right ſetling of your Peace is this. You muſt know, that *Aſſurance of Juſtification, Adoption and right to Salvation cannot be gathered from the ſmalleſt degree of ſaving Grace.*

Here I muſt ſay ſomething for explaining my meaning to you. 2. And then give you my Reaſons of this aſſertion.

1. Underſtand that I ſpeak of Gods ordinary working by means, not denying but God may by a voice from Heaven, or an Angel, or other ſupernatural Revelation, beſtow Aſſurance on whom he pleaſeth. But I hope all wiſe Chriſtians will take heed of expecting this, or of truſting too much to ſeeming Revelations, unleſs they could prove that God uſeth to conſer Aſſurance in this way; which I think they cannot.

2. By *the ſmalleſt degree of grace*, I mean, of Faith, Love, Obedience, and thoſe ſaving Graces, whoſe acts are the Condition of our ſalvation, and which in the fore-expreſſed Marks I laid down to you. Do not therefore ſo far miſtake me, as to think that I ſpeak of a ſmall meaſure of thoſe common Gifts which are ſeparable from true Sanctification: ſuch as are extenſive Knowledge, Memory, Ability of utterance in Preaching, Repeating, Exhorting or Praying; An ornate plauſible winning deportment before men, ſuch as is commonly called Good breeding or

or Manners; An affected, humble, complemental familiarity and condeſcenſion, to creep into mens eſtimation and affections, and ſteal their hearts, &c. Many a one that is ſtrong in ſaving Grace, is weak in all theſe, and other the like.

Now for my Reaſons.

1. I conceive that it is not poſſible for any Miniſter punctually to ſet down a diſcernable difference between the leaſt meaſure of True ſaving Grace, and the higheſt degree of common Grace; and to ſay, Juſt here it is that they part, or by this you may diſcern them. I do but ſay, I think ſo, becauſe other men may know far more than I do: But I will ſay it as certain, that I am not able to do it, for my own part. This much I can tell, that the leaſt degree of Grace that is ſaving, doth determine the ſoul for God and Chriſt, againſt the world and fleſh that ſtands as Competitors; and ſo where Chriſts intereſt prevaileth in the leaſt meaſure, there is the leaſt meaſure of ſaving Grace: As when you are weighing two things in the ballance, and at laſt make it ſo near even weight, that one end is turned and no more: ſo when you are conſidering whether to be for Chriſt, or for the fleſh and the world, and your Will is but even a very little Determined to Chriſt, and preferreth him; this is the leaſt meaſure of ſaving Grace. But then how a poor ſoul ſhould diſcern this prevalent choice and determination of it ſelf, is all the Queſtion. For there is nothing more eaſie and common than for men to think verily, that they prefer Chriſt above the creature, as long as no temptation doth aſſault them, nor ſenſual objects ſtand up in any conſiderable ſtrength to entice them: Nay, wicked men do truly, oft-times, purpoſe to obey Chriſt before the fleſh, and to take him for their

Lord,

Lord, meerly in the general, when they do not know, or consider the quality of his Laws; that they are so strict and spiritual, and contrary to the flesh, and hazardous to their worldly hopes and seeming happiness: But when it comes to particulars, and God saith, *Now deny thy self, and thy friend, and thy goods, and thy life for my sake*; alas, it was never his Resolution to do it; nor will he be perswaded to it. But he that said to God who sends him to labour in his Vineyard, *I go, Sir*, when he comes to find the unpleasingness of the work, he goes not, nor never sets a hand to it. So that it is evident that it is no true saving Resolution or Willingness, which prevaileth not for Actual Obedience. Now here comes in the unresolvable doubt, What is the least Measure of Obedience that will prove a man truly Willing and Resolved, or to have truly Accepted of Christ for his Lord? This obedience lyeth in Performing what is commanded, and Avoiding what is forbidden. Now it is too certain, that every true Believer is guilty of a frequent neglect of Duty, yea of known Duty: We know we should Love God more abundantly, and Delight in him, and Meditate more on him, and Pray more oft and earnestly than we do, and instruct our Families more diligently, and speak against sin more boldly, and admonish our neighbours more faithfully, with many the like: *The good that we would do, we do not*, *Rom.* 7. 19. Nay the flesh so striveth against the Spirit, that we *cannot do the good we would*, *Gal.* 5. 17. Nay, many a true Christian in time of temptation hath been drawn to omit secret prayer, or family duties almost wholly for a certain space of time: yea, and perhaps to be so corrupted in his judgement for a time, as to think he doth well in it, as also in forbearing praising God by Psalms, Receiving

ceiving the Sacraments, and Communicating with the Church, hearing the Word publikely, *&c.* (for what duty almoſt is not denyed of late?) and perhaps may not only omit Relieving the poor for a time, but excuſe it. Now what man can punctually determine juſt how often a true Chriſtian may be guilty of any ſuch omiſſion? and juſt how long he may continue it? and what the Duties be which he may poſſibly ſo omit, and what not?

So alſo in Sins of Commiſſion: Alas, what ſins did *Noah*, *Lot*, *David*, *Solomon*, *Aſa*, *Peter*, *&c.* commit? If we ſhould ſay as the Papiſts, and Arminians, that theſe being mortal ſins, do for the time, till Repentance reſtore him, caſt a true Chriſtian out of Gods favour into a ſtate of Damnation; then what man, breathing is able to enumerate thoſe Mortal ſins? and tell us which be ſo Damning, and which not? Nay if he could ſay, Drunkenneſs is one; and Gluttony another; Who can ſet the punctual ſtint and ſay, Juſt ſo many bits a man muſt eat before he be a Glutton: or Juſt ſo much he muſt drink before he be a Drunkard? or by ſuch a ſign the turning point may be certainly known? We may have ſigns by which he may be tryed at the Bar of Man: but theſe are none of them taken from that ſmalleſt degree, which ſpecifieth and denominates the ſin before God. If we avoid the foreſaid opinion, that one ſuch ſin doth bring us into the ſtate of Damnation, yet is the difficulty never the leſs; For it is certain, that *he that commits ſin is of the Devil*, 1 Joh. 3. 8. and there are ſpots, which are not the ſpots of Gods children: and all true faith will mortifie the world to us, and us to it, Gal. 6. 14. and *he that is in Chriſt hath crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts thereof,*

thereof, Gal. 5. 24. and that *If we live after the flesh we shall die*, Rom. 8. 13. and *his servants we are to whom we obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto Righteousness*, Rom. 6. 16. and *if we delight in iniquity, or regard it, God will not hear our prayers*, Psal. 66. 18. and that *he that nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity*, 1 Tim. 2. 19. and that *God will judge all men according to their works*, and bid the workers of iniquity depart from him, *Mat.* 7. 23. Now can any man on earth tell us just how great or how often sinning will stand with true Grace, and how much will not? who can find those punctual bounds in the Word of God? I conclude therefore, that no Minister, or at least, none who is no wiser than I am, can give a true discernable difference between the worst of Saints, and the best of the unsanctified, or the weakest degree of true Grace, and the highest of common Grace; and so to help such weak Christians to true Assurance of their salvation.

2. But as this is impossible to be declared by the Teachers, so much more is it impossible to be discerned by the persons themselves, (yea, though it could possibly be declared to him:) and that for these Reasons.

1. From the nature of the thing. Small things are hardly discerned. A little is next to none. 2. From the great darkness of mans understanding, and his unacquaintedness with himself (both the nature, faculties and motions of his soul naturally considered, and the moral state, dispositions and motions of it) and is it likely that so blind an eye can discern the smallest thing, and that in so strange and dark a place? Every purblind man cannot see an atome, or a pin, especially in the dark. 3. The heart is deceitful above

all

all things as well as dark; full of ſeemings, counterfeits and falſe pretences: And a child in Grace is not able to diſcover its juglings, and underſtand his book where almoſt every word is equivocal or myſterious. 4. The heart is moſt confuſed, as well as dark and deceitful: It is like a houſe or ſhop of tools, where all things are thrown together on a heap, and nothing keeps its own place: There are ſuch multiplicity of cogitations, phantaſies and paſſions, and ſuch irregular thronging in of them, and ſuch a confuſed reception, and operation of Objects and Conceptions, that it is a wonderful difficult thing for the beſt Chriſtian to diſcern clearly the bent and actions, and ſo the ſtate of his own ſoul. For in ſuch a crowd of cogitations and paſſions we are like men in a Fair or crowd of people, where a confuſed noiſe may be heard, but you cannot well perceive what any of them ſay, except either ſome one near you that ſpeaks much lowder than all the reſt, or elſe except you ſingle out ſome one from the reſt, and go cloſe to him to conſer with him of purpoſe. Our Intellect and Paſſions are like the lakes of water in the common roads, where the frequent paſſage of Horſes doth ſo muddy it, that you can ſee nothing in it, eſpecially that is near the bottom, when in pure untroubled waters you may ſee a ſmall thing. In ſuch a confuſion and tumult as is uſually in mens ſouls, for a poor weak Chriſtian to ſeek for the diſcovery of his ſincerity, is according to the proverb, to ſeek for a needle in a bottle of hay. 5. Beſides all this, the corrupt heart of man is ſo exceeding backward to the work of ſelf-examination, and the uſe of other means by which the ſoul ſhould be familiarly acquainted with it ſelf, that in a caſe of ſuch difficulty it will hardly ever overcome them, if it were a thing

that

that might be done. In the beſt, a great deal of reſolvedneſs, diligence and unwearied conſtancy in ſearching into the ſtate of the ſoul, is neceſſary to the attainment of a ſetled Aſſurance and Peace: How much more in them that have ſo ſmall and almoſt undiſcernable a meaſure of Grace to diſcover. 6. Yet further, The Conceptions, Apprehenſions and conſequently the ſenſible motions of the will, and eſpecially the Paſſions, are all naturally exceeding mutable; and while the mobile, agile ſpirits are any way the Inſtruments, it will be ſo: eſpecially where the Impreſſion which is made in the underſtanding is ſo ſmall and weak. Naturally mans mind and will is exceeding mutable, turned into an hundred ſhapes in a few dayes, according as objects are preſented to us, and the temperature of the body diſpoſeth, helps or hinders the mind. Let us hear one man reaſon the Caſe, and we think he makes all as clear as the Light: Let us hear another ſolve all his Arguments and diſpute for the contrary, and then we ſee that our Apprehenſions were abuſed. Let us hear him Reply and confute all again, and confirm his cauſe, and then we think him in the right again. Nothing more changeable than the conceivings and mind of man, till he be throughly Reſolved and Habituated. Now in this caſe, how ſhall thoſe that have but little Grace be able to diſcern it? It will not keep the mind from fluctuating. If they ſeem Reſolved for obedience to Chriſt to day, to morrow they are ſo ſhaken by ſome enticing object, and force of the ſame temptation, that their Reſolution is undiſcernable; nay Actually they prefer ſin at that time before obedience; It is impoſſible then but the ſoul ſhould ſtagger and be at a loſs; for it will judge of it ſelf as it finds it ſelf, and it cannot diſcern the Habitual Prevalency of

Chriſts

Christs intereſt when they feel the Actual Prevalency of the fleſhes Intereſt: For the Act is the only diſcoverer of the Habit: And if *Peter* himſelf ſhould have fallen to the examination of his heart, Whether he Preferred Chriſt before his Life, at the ſame time when he was denying and forſwearing Chriſt to ſave his Life, do you think he could have diſcerned it? and yet even then Chriſts Intereſt was greateſt in him Habitually. If *David* ſhould have gone to ſearch, whether he preferred obedience to God before his fleſhly pleaſure, when he was committing Adultery; or before his credit, when he was plotting the death of *Uriah*, what diſcovery do you think he would have made? 7. Add to all theſe, that as theſe ſeveral diſtempers, were they but in the ſame meaſure in a weak Chriſtian as they are in the beſt or in moſt, would yet make the ſmalleſt meaſure of Grace undiſcernable (if we might ſuppoſe the ſmalleſt Grace to be conſiſtent with ſuch a frame;) ſo it is certain that whoever he be that hath the leaſt meaſure of Grace to diſcover in himſelf, he hath proportionably the leaſt meaſure of abilities and helps to diſcover it, and the greateſt meaſure of all the forementioned hinderances: He that hath but a very little Repentance, Faith, Love, and Obedience ſincere, when he goeth to find it out, he hath in the ſame meaſure, a Darker Underſtanding to diſcern it than others have; and a greater ſtrangeneſs and diſacquaintance with himſelf; and more deceitfulneſs in his heart; and a greater confuſion and hurlyburly in his thoughts and Affections, and all more out of order and to ſeek: Alſo he hath a greater backwardneſs to the work of ſelf-examination, and can hardly get his heart to it, and more hardly to do it throughly, and ſearch to the quick, and moſt hardly to hold on againſt

againſt all withdrawing temptations, till he have made a clearer diſcovery. And laſtly, his ſoul is more mutable than ſtronger Chriſtians are, and therefore when croſs Actings are ſo frequent, he cannot diſcern the ſmalleſt prevailing Habit. If (when you are weighing Gold) the ſcales be turned but with one grain, every little jogg, or wind, or unſteadfaſt holding will actually lift up the heavier end; and its preponderation is with great wavering and mobility. 8. Yet further, Conſider, thoſe that have leaſt Grace, have moſt ſin, habitual and actual; and they are ſo frequent in tranſgreſſing, that their failings are ſtill in their eye, and thereby the prevalency of Chriſts intereſt is made more doubtful and obſcure: For when he asketh his own conſcience, *Do I will or love moſt the world and my fleſhly delights, or Chriſt and his waies?* preſently conſcience remembreth him at ſuch a time, and ſuch a time thou didſt chuſe thy fleſhly pleaſures, profits or credit, and refuſe obedience: and it is ſo oft, and ſo foully, that the ſoul is utterly at a loſs, and cannot diſcern the Habitual prevalent bent and Reſolution of the Will. 9. Beſides, Conſcience is a Judge in mans ſoul, and will be accuſing and condemning men ſo far as they are guilty: now, they that make work for the moſt frequent and terrible Accuſations of Conſcience that will ſtand with true Grace, are unlikely to have Aſſurance. For Aſſurance quiets the ſoul, and eaſeth it; and a galled Conſcience works the contrary way. They that keep open the wound, and daily fret off the skin more, and are ſtill grating on the galled part, are unlikely to have Aſſurance. 10. Again, Theſe weakeſt Chriſtians being leaſt in duty, and moſt in ſining (of any in whom ſin reigneth not) they are conſequently moſt in provoking and diſpleaſing God. And they

they that do ſo ſhall find that God will ſhew them his diſpleaſure, and will diſpleaſe them again. They muſt not look to enjoy aſſurance, or ſee the pleaſed face of God, till they are more careful to pleaſe him, and are more ſparing, and ſeldom in offending him. As Gods univerſal Juſtice in Governing the world, will make as great a difference between the ſincerely Obedient and Diſobedient, as there is between Heaven and Hell: ſo Gods Paternal Juſtice in Governing his family, will make as wide a difference between the more Obedient children and the leſs Obedient, as is between his dreadful frowns, and his joyous reviving ſmiles; or between his ſmarting Rod, or his encouraging Rewards. 11. If God ſhould give Aſſurance and Peace to the ſinning and leaſt obedient believers, he ſhould not fit his providential diſpoſals to their good. It is not that which their ſtate requires, nor would it tend to their Cure any more than a healing plaiſter, to a ſore that is rotten in the bottom, or a cordial to the Removal of a cacochymy, or the purging out of corrupt redundant humours. They are ſo inclined to the Lethargy of ſecurity, that they have need of continual pinching, ſtriking, or loud calling on, to keep them waking: (ſtill remember that by this weak Chriſtian, I mean not every doubting diſtreſſed ſoul, that is weak in their own apprehenſion, and little in their own eyes, and poor in ſpirit: but I mean thoſe that have the leaſt meaſure of ſincere love to Chriſt, and deſire after him, and tenderneſs of conſcience, and care to pleaſe God, and the greateſt meaſure of ſecurity, worldlineſs, pride, fleſh-pleaſing, and boldneſs in ſinning, which is conſiſtent with ſincerity in the faith.) I believe there is no father or mother that hath children to govern, but they know by experience, that

there is a neceſſity of frowns and rods for the more diſobedient; and that rewards and ſmiles are no cure for ſtubborneſs or contempt. 12. Laſtly, Do but well conſider, what a ſolœciſm in Government it would be, and what deſperate inconveniences it would have brought into the world, if God ſhould but have ſet ſuch a punctual land-mark between his Kingdom and the Kingdom of Satan, as we are ready to dream of: If God ſhould have ſaid in his Word, juſt ſo oft a man may be drunk, or may murder, or commit adultery, or ſteal, or forſwear himſelf, and yet be a true Chriſtian and be ſaved! Or juſt ſo far a man may go in neglecting duty to God and man, and in cheriſhing his fleſh, hiding his ſin, *&c.* and yet be a true believer and be ſaved. This would 1. Embolden men in ſinning, and make them think, I may yet venture, for I ſtand on ſafe ground: 2. And it would hinder Repentance: Indeed it would be the way to rob God of his honour; and multiply provocations againſt him, and keep his ch ldren in diſobedience, and hinder their growth in holineſs, and cauſe a deformity in Chriſts body, and a ſhame to his Religion and ſacred name. As for thoſe that ſay, *Aſſurance never encourageth men in ſin, but tends to deſtroy it.* I anſwer, It is true of Gods Aſſurance, ſeaſonably given to thoſe that are fit for it, and uſed by them accordingly: But if God ſhould have told all the world, juſt how far they may ſin, and yet be certain of ſalvation, this would have bred Aſſurance in thoſe that were unfit for it, and it would have been but the putting of new wine into old crackt bottles, or a new piece into an old garment, that would break them, or make worſe the rent. I muſt therefore freely tell theſe objectors (I am ſorry that ſo many of my old acquaintance

now

now harp ſo much on this Antinomian ſtring) that ignorance or error hath ſo blinded them, that they have forgotten, or know not 1. What an imperfect piece the beſt is in this life, much more the worſt true Chriſtian. 2. Nor what a ſubtil Devil we have to tempt us. 3. Nor what an active thing corruption is, and what advantage it will take on unſeaſonable Aſſurance. 4. Nor what the nature of Grace and Sanctification is; and how much of it lyes in a godly jealouſie of our ſelves, and apprehenſion of our danger, and that *the fear of God is the beginning of wiſdom*, See *Heb.* 4. 1. Nay 5. They have forgotten what a man is, and how inſeparable from his nature is the Principle of ſelf-preſervation, and how neceſſary the apprehenſion of danger, and the fear of evil to himſelf, is to the avoiding of that evil, and ſo to his preſervation. 6. Yea if they knew but what a Commonwealth or a family is, they would know that fear of evil, and deſire of ſelf-preſervation, is the very motive to Aſſociations, and the ground-work of all Laws and Government, and a great part of the life of all Obedience.

And thus I have fully proved to you, *That the ſmalleſt meaſure of Grace, cannot help men to Aſſurance in Gods ordinary way.*

Perhaps you will ſay, What comfort is there in this to a poor weak Chriſtian? This is rather the way to put him quite out of heart and hope. I anſwer. No ſuch matter: I ſhall ſhew you the uſes of this obſervation in the following Directions. In the mean time I will ſay but this, *The expectations of unſeaſonable Aſſurance, and out of Gods way, is a very great cauſe of keeping many in languiſhing and diſtreſs, and of cauſing others to turn Antinomians, and ſnatch at comforts, which God never gave them, and to feign*

and frame an Assurance of their own making, or build upon the delusions of the great Deceiver, transforming himself into an Angel of Light.

Direction XIII.

13. From the last mentioned Observation, there is one plain Consectary arising, which I think you may do well to note by the way, *viz.* That *According to Gods ordinary way of giving Grace, it cannot be expected that Christians should be able to know the very time of their first receiving or acting true saving Grace, or just when they were Pardoned, Justified, Adopted, and put into a state of Salvation.*

THis must needs be undeniable, if you grant the former Point, *That the least measure of Grace, yieldeth not Assurance of its sincerity* (which is proved:) and withall if you grant this plain truth, *That it is Gods ordinary way, to give a small measure of grace at the first.* This I prove thus: 1. Christ likeneth Gods Kingdom of Grace to a grain of mustard-seed, which is at first the least of all seeds, but after cometh to a tree: And to a little leaven which leaveneth the whole lump: I will not deny but this may be applied to the visible progress of the Gospel, and increase of the Church: but it is plainly appliable also to the Kingdom of Christ within us. 2. The Scripture oft

oft calleth ſuch young beginners, Babes, Children, Novices, &c. 3. We are all commanded ſtill *to grow in grace*, which implieth that we have our ſmalleſt meaſure at the firſt. 4. *Heb.* 5. 12. ſheweth, that ſtrength of Grace ſhould be according to time and means. 5. Common experience is an invincible argument for this. Men are at a diſtance from Chriſt when he firſt calleth them to come to him: and many ſteps they have *Toward* him before they reach *To* him. We are firſt ſo far enlightned as to ſee our ſin and miſery, and the meaning and truth of the Goſpel, and ſo rowſed out of our ſecurity, and made to look about us, and ſee that we have ſouls to ſave or loſe, and that it is no jeſting matter to be a Chriſtian: and ſo we come to underſtand the tenour of the Covenant, and Chriſts terms of ſaving men: But alas, how long is it uſually after this, before we come ſincerely to yield to his terms, and take him as he is offered, and Renounce the World, Fleſh and the Devil, and Give up our ſelves to him in a faithful Covenant! We are long deliberating before we can get our backward hearts to Reſolve. How then ſhould a man know juſt when he was paſt the higheſt ſtep of common or preparative Grace, and arrived at the firſt ſtep of ſpecial Grace?

Yet mark, that I here ſpeak only of Gods ordinary way of giving Grace: For I doubt not but in ſome God may give a higher degree of Grace at the firſt day of their converſion, than ſome others do attain in many years. And thoſe may know the time of their true Converſion, both becauſe the effect was ſo diſcernable, and becauſe the ſuddenneſs makes the change more ſenſible and obſervable.

But this is not the ordinary courſe. Ordinarily Convictions lie long on the ſoul before they come

to a true converſion. Conſcience is wounded, and ſmarting long, and long grudging againſt our ſinful and negligent courſes, and telling us of the Neceſſity of Chriſt and a holy life, before we ſincerely obey Conſcience, and give up our ſelves to Chriſt. We ſeldom yield to the firſt conviction or perſwaſion. The Fleſh hath uſually too long time given it to plead its own Cauſe; and to ſay to the Soul, *Wilt thou forſake all thy pleaſure and merry company and courſes? Wilt thou beggar thy ſelf? or make thy ſelf a ſcorn and mocking ſtock to the world? Art thou ever able to hold out in ſo ſtrict a courſe? and to be undone? and to forſake all, and lay down thy life for Chriſt? Is it not better venture thy ſelf in the ſame way as thou haſt gone in, as well as others do, and as ſo many of the forefathers have done before thee?* Under ſuch ſinful deliberations as theſe we uſually continue long before we fully Reſolve: And many demurs and delayes we make before we conclude to take Chriſt on the terms that he is offered to us. Now I make no doubt but moſt or many Chriſtians can remember how and when God ſtirred their Conſciences, and wakened them from their ſecurity, and made them look about them, and rouſed them out of their natural Lethargy: Some can tell what Sermon firſt did it: Others can remember by what degrees and ſteps God was doing it long: The ordinary way appointed by God for the doing of it firſt, is the inſtruction of Parents: And (as I have fullier manifeſted in my book of *Infant-Baptiſm*) if Parents would do their duties, they would find, that *The word* publikely preached was not appointed to be the firſt ordinary means of Converſion, and ſanctification: but commonly, Grace would be received in childhood: I ſpeak not of Baptiſmal Relative Grace, conſiſting in the pardon

of

of Original ſin; nor yet any infuſion of Habits before they have the uſe of reaſon (becauſe I ſuppoſe it is hid from us, what God doth in that,) But I ſpeak of actual Converſion: and I prove that this ſhould be the firſt ordinary way and time of Converſion to the children of true Chriſtians, becauſe it is the firſt means that God hath appointed to be uſed with them, *Deut.* 6.6,7,8. *Eph.* 6.4. Parents are commanded to teach their children the Law of God, urgently, at home, and as they walk abroad, lying down, and riſing up; and to bring them up in the admonition and nurture of the Lord, and to train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and then when they are old they will not depart from it, *Prov.* 22. 6. And children are commanded to *Remember their Creator in the dayes of their youth*, Eccleſ. 12. 1. And if this be Gods firſt great means, then doubtleſs he will ordinarily bleſs his own means here, as well as in the Preaching of the Word.

From all this I would have you learn this leſſon: That *you ought not to trouble your ſelf with fears and doubts, leſt you are not truly Regenerate, becauſe you know not the Sermon or the very time and manner of your Converſion: but find that you have grace, and then, though you know not juſt the time or manner of your receiving of it, yet you may nevertheleſs be Aſſured of Salvation by it.* Search therefore what you are, and how your will is diſpoſed and reſolved, and how your Life is ordered, rather then to know how you became ſuch. I know the workings of the ſpirit on the ſoul may be diſcerned, becauſe they ſtir up diſcernable Actings in our own ſpirits. The ſouls Convictions, Conſideration, Reſolutions, and Affections are no inſenſible things: But yet the work of Grace uſually begins in common Grace, and ſo pro-

ceeds by degrees till it come to ſpecial ſaving Grace, even as the work of nature doth, firſt producing the matter, and then introducing the form; firſt producing the *embryo*, before it introduce a Rational ſoul. And as no child knows the time or manner of his own Formation, Vivification or Reception of that ſoul, ſo I think, few true Believers can ſay, Juſt ſuch a day, or at ſuch a Sermon I became a true Juſtified, Sanctified man. That was the hour of your true Converſion and Juſtification, *When you firſt preferred God, and Chriſt, and Grace before all things in this world, and deliberately and ſeriouſly Reſolved to take Chriſt for your Saviour and Governour, and give up your ſelf to him to be ſaved, taught and governed, and to obey him faithfully to the death againſt all temptations, whatſoever you ſhould loſe or ſuffer by it.* Now I would but ask thoſe very Chriſtians that think they do know the very Sermon that converted them, Did that Sermon bring you to this Reſolution? Or was it not only ſome troubling rowſing preparation hereto? I think ſome deſperate ſickneſs or the like Affliction is a very uſual means to bring Reſolutions to be downright and fixed, with many ſouls that long delayed and fluctuated in inreſolvedneſs, and lay under meer uneffectual Convictions.

Object. But this runs on your own grounds: that ſaving Grace and common Grace do differ but in degrees.

Anſw. I think moſt will confeſs, that as to the Acts of Grace, and that is it that we are now enquiring after; and that is all the means that we have of diſcerning the Habits: Yet remember that I ſtill tell you, That *there is a ſpecifical Moral difference, though grounded but in a gradual Natural difference.* Yea, and that one grain of the Spirits working which

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turns the will in a prevalent meaſure for Chriſt, (together with the illumination neceſſary thereto) deſerves all thoſe elogies and high titles that are given it in the Word; ſo great a change doth it make in the ſoul! Well may it be called, *The New Creature: Born of the Spirit: The Workmanſhip of God: The New Life:* yea, *The Image of God*, and *The Divine Nature.* (if that text be not meant of the divine nature in Chriſt which we are Relatively made partakers of in our Union with him.) When you are weighing things in the ballance, you may add grain after grain, and it makes no turning or motion at all, till you come to the very laſt grain, and then ſuddenly that end which was downward is turned upward. When you ſtand at a loſs between two high waies, not knowing which way to go, as long as you are deliberate, you ſtand ſtill: All the reaſons that come into your mind do not ſtir you: But the laſt Reaſon which Reſolves you, ſetteth you in motion. So is it in the change of a ſinners heart and life: He is not changed (but preparing towards it) while he is but Deliberating, whether he ſhould chuſe Chriſt or the world? But the laſt Reaſon that comes in and Determineth his Will to Chriſt, and makes him reſolve and enter a firm Covenant with Chriſt, and ſay, *I will have Chriſt for Better or Worſe*; this maketh the greateſt change that ever is made by any work in this world. For how can there be greater than the turning of a ſoul from the creature to the Creator? ſo diſtant are the terms of this change. After this one Turning act Chriſt hath that Heart, and the main bent and endeavours of the life, which the world had before. The man hath a new End, a new Rule and Guide, and a new Maſter. Before the Fleſh and the Devil were his Maſters, and now Chriſt is his Maſter.

Maſter. So that you muſt not think ſo meanly of the Turning, Determining, Reſolving act of Grace, becauſe it lyeth but in a gradual difference naturally from common Grace; if a Prince ſhould offer a condemned beggar to marry her, and pardon her, and make her his Queen: Her Deliberation may be the way to her Conſent, and one Reaſon after another may bring her near to Conſenting. But it is that which turns her will to Conſent, Reſolve, Covenant and Deliver her ſelf to him, which makes the great change in her ſtate. Yet all the foregoing Work of common Grace hath a hand in the change, though only the turning Reſolution do effect it: It is the reſt with this that doth it: As when the laſt grain turns the ſcales, the former do concur. I will conclude with D. *Preſtons* words in his Golden Scepter, *pag.* 210. Obj. *It ſeems then that the knowledge of a carnal man, and of a Regenerate man do differ but in degrees, and not in kind.* Anſw. *The want of degrees here alter the kind. As in Numbers the Addition of a Degree alters the ſpeciet and kind.* Read for this alſo D. *Jackſon* of ſaving Faith, §. 3. *ch.* 3. *pag.* 297, 298. and frequently in other places. So much of that obſervation.

DIRECTION

DIRECTION XIV.

14. Yet further I would have you to underſtand this: That *As the leaſt meaſure of Saving Grace is ordinarily undiſcernable from the greateſt meaſure of common Grace, (notwithſtanding the greatneſs of the change that it makes) ſo a meaſure ſomewhat greater is ſo hardly diſcernable, that it ſeldom brings Aſſurance; And therefore it is only the ſtronger Chriſtians that attain Aſſurance ordinarily; even thoſe, who have a great degree of faith and love, and keep them much in exerciſe, and are very watchful and careful in Obedience: And conſequently (moſt Chriſtians being of the weaker ſort) it is but few that do attain to Aſſurance of their Juſtification and Salvation.*

HEre are two or three points which I would have you diſtinctly to obſerve, though I lay them all together for brevity. 1. That it is only a greater meaſure of Grace that will ordinarily afford Aſſurance. 2. That therefore it is only the ſtronger, and holier, and more obedient ſort of Chriſtians that uſually reach to a Certainty of Salvation. 3. That few Chriſtians do reach to a ſtrong or high degree of Grace. 4. And therefore it is but few Chriſtians that reach to Aſſurance.

For

For the two first of these, it will evidently appear that they are true, by reviewing the Reasons which I gave of the last point save one. He that will attain to a Certainty of Salvation, must 1. Have a large measure of Grace to be discerned. 2. He must have that Grace much in action, and lively Action: For it is not meer Habits that are discernable. 3. He must have a clear understanding to be acquainted with the nature of Spiritual things: To know what is a sound evidence, and how to follow the search, and how to repel particular Temptations. 4. He must have a good acquaintance and familiarity with his own heart, and to that end must be much at home, and be used sometime to a diligent observation of his heart and waies. 5. He must be in a good measure acquainted with, and a Conquerour of contradicting Temptations. 6. He must have some competent cure of the deep deceitfulness of the heart, and it must be brought to an open, plain, ingenuous frame, willing to know the worst of it self. 7. He must have some cure of that ordinary confusion and tumultuous disorder that is in the thought and affections of men: and get things into an order in his mind. 8. He must be a man of Diligence, Resolution, and unwearied Patience, that will Resolvedly set on the work of self-examination, and painfully watch in it, and constantly follow it from time to time till he attain a Certainty. 9. He must be one that is very fearful of sinning, and careful in close obedient walking with God, and much in sincere and spiritual duty, that he keep not conscience still in accusing and condemning him, and God still offended with him, and his wounds fresh bleeding, and his soul still smarting. 10. He must be a man of much fixedness and constancy of mind, and not of the ordinary mutability of mankind; that so he

he may not by remitting his zeal and diligence, loſe the ſight of his evidences, nor by leaving open his ſoul to an alteration by every new intruding thought and temptation, let go his Aſſurance as ſoon as he attaineth it. All theſe things in a good degree are Neceſſary to the attaining of Aſſurance of Salvation.

And then do I need to ſay any more to the Confirmation of the third Point, That few Chriſtians reach this meaſure of Grace? O that it were not as clear as the light, and as diſcernable as the earth under our feet, that moſt true Chriſtians are weaklings, and of the lower forms in the School of Chriſt! Alas, how ignorant are moſt of the beſt? How little Love, or Faith, or Zeal, or heavenly mindedneſs, or Delight in God have they? How unacquainted with a frequent exerciſe of theſe Graces? How unacquainted with the way of ſelf-examination? and how backward to it? and how dull and careleſs in it? doing it by the halves, as *Laban* ſearched *Rachel*'s Tent? How eaſily put off with an excuſe? How little acquainted with their own hearts? or with Satans temptations and waies of deceiving! how much deceitfulneſs remaineth in their hearts? how confuſed are their minds? and what diſtractions and tumults are there in their thoughts? how bold are they in ſinning? and how little tenderneſs of Conſcience, and care of obeying have they? how frequently do they wound conſcience, provoke God, and obſcure their Evidences? and how mutable are their Apprehenſions? and how ſoon do they loſe that Aſſurance which they once attain? and upon every occaſion quite loſe the ſight of their evidences? yea and Remit their actual Reſolutions, and ſo loſe much of the Evidence it ſelf? Is not this the common caſe of Godly people? O that we could truly deny it: Let their lives be witneſs,

let

let their visible neglects, worldlineſs, pride, impatiency of plain Reproof, remiſneſs of zeal, dulneſs and cuſtomarineſs in duty, ſtrangeneſs to God, unwillingneſs to ſecret Prayer and Meditation, unacquaintedneſs with the Spirits operations and joyes, their unpeaceableneſs one with another, and their too frequent blemiſhing the glory of their holy Profeſſion by the unevenneſs of their walking, let all theſe witneſs, whether the ſchool of Chriſt have not moſt children in it: and how few of them ever go to the *Univerſity* of riper knowledge? and how few of thoſe are fit to begin here the works of their Prieſtly Office, which they muſt live in for ever? in the high and joyful Praiſes of God and of the Lamb, who hath Redeemed them by his Blood, and made them Kings and Prieſts to God, that they may Reign with him for ever? I am content to ſtand to the Judgement of all humble ſelf-knowing Chriſtians, whether this be not true of moſt of themſelves? and for thoſe that deny it, I will ſtand to the Judgement of their Godly neighbours, who perhaps know them better than they know themſelves.

And then this being all ſo, the fourth point is undeniable, That *It is but very few Chriſtians that reach to Aſſurance of Salvation.* If any think (as intemperate hot-ſpirited men are like enough to charge me) that in all this I countenance the Popiſh Doctrine of Doubting and Uncertainty, and contradict the common doctrine of the Reformed Divines that write againſt them; I anſwer, 1. I do contradict both the Papiſts that deny Aſſurance, and many forreign Writers, who make it far more Eaſie, Common, and Neceſſary than it is (much more both them and the Antinomiſts, who place Juſtifying faith in it.) But I ſtand in the midſt between both extreams; and

I think

I think I have the company of moſt Engliſh Divines. 2. I come not to be of this mind meerly by reading Books, but mainly, by reading my own heart, and conſulting my own experience, and the experience of a very great number of Godly people of all ſorts, who have opened their hearts to me, for almoſt twenty years time. 3. I would intreat the Gainſayers to ſtudy their own hearts better for ſome conſiderable time, and to be more in hearing the caſe and complaints of Godly people; and by that time they may happily come to be of my mind. 4. See whether all thoſe Divines that have been very practical, and ſucceſsful in the work of God, and much acquainted with the way of the Recovery of loſt ſouls, be not all of the ſame judgement as I in this point, (ſuch as *T. Hooker, Jo. Rogers, Preſton, Sibbs, Bolton, Dod, Culverwel*, &c.) And whether the confidenteſt men for the contrary be not thoſe that ſtudy Books more than hearts, and ſpend their dayes in Diſputing, and not in winning ſouls to God from the world.

Laſtly, Let me add to what is ſaid, theſe two Proofs of this fourth Point here aſſerted.

1. The conſtant experience of the greateſt part of Believers tells us, that Certainty of ſalvation is very rare. Even of thoſe that live comfortably and in peace of Conſcience, yet very few of them do attain to a Certainty. For my part, it is known that God in undeſerved Mercy hath given me long the ſociety of a great number of Godly people, and great intereſt in them, and privacy with them, and opportunity to know their minds, and this in many places (my ſtation by providence having been oft removed,) and I muſt needs profeſs, that of all theſe I have met with few, yea very few indeed, that if I ſeriouſly and privately asked them, *Are you certain that you are a true Believer,*

liever, and so are Justified, and shall be Saved, durst say to me, *I am Certain of it.* But some in great doubts and fears: most too secure and neglective of their states without Assurance, and some in so good hopes (to speak in their own language) as calmeth their spirits, that they can comfortably cast themselves on God in Christ. And those few that have gone so far beyond all the rest, as to say, *They were Certain of their sincerity and salvation*, were the Professors whose state I suspected more than any of the rest: as being the most proud, self-conceited, censorious, passionate, unpeaceable sort of Professors: and some of them living scandalously, and some fallen since to more scandalous waies than ever: And the most of their humble, godly acquaintance or neighbours suspected them as well as I. Or else some very few of them that said they were certain, were honest godly people (most women) of small Judgement and strong Affections; who depended most on that which is commonly called *The sense or feeling of Gods love*; and were the lowest at some times, as they were the highest at other times: and they that were one month certain to be saved, perhaps the next month were almost ready to say, they should certainly be damned. So that taking out all these sorts of persons, the sober, solid, judicious believers, that could groundedly and ordinarily say, *I am Certain that I shall be Saved*, have been so few, that it is sad to me to consider it. If any other mens experiences be contrary, I am glad of it; so be it they be Sober, Judicious men, able to gather experiences; and so they live not among meer Antinomians, and take not the discovery of their meer opinion, for a discovery of experience. For I have seen in divers Professors of my long acquaintance, the strange power of Opinion, and Phan-

tasie

taſie in this thing. I have known thoſe that have lived many years in doubting of their Salvation and all that while walked uprightly; and in the late, Wars, falling into the company of ſome Anabaptiſts, they were by them perſwaded that there was no right way to their comfort but by being Re-baptized; and aſſociating themſelves with the Re-baptized Church, and abſtaining from the hearing of the Unbaptized Paniſh-Prieſts (as they called them) No ſooner was this done, but all their former doubtings and trouble were over, and they were as comfortable as any others (as themſelves affirmed), which no doubt proceeded from, partly the ſtrength of Phantaſie, conceiting it ſhould be ſo, and partly from the Novelty of their way which delighted them, and partly from the ſtrong Opinion they had that this was the way of Salvation, and that the want of this did keep them in the dark ſo long, and partly from Satans policy, who troubleth people leaſt, when they are in a way that pleaſeth him; But when theſe people had lived a year or two in this comfortable condition, they fell at laſt into the ſociety of ſome Libertines or Familiſts, who believe that the Scriptures are all but a dream, fiction, or Allegory: Theſe preſently perſwaded them, that they were fools to regard Baptiſm or ſuch Ordinances, and that they might come to hear again in our Congregations, ſeeing all things were lawful, and there was no Heaven or Hell but within men, and therefore they ſhould look to their ſafety and credit in the world, and take their pleaſure. This leſſon was quickly learned, and then they cried down the Anabaptiſts, and confeſſed they were deluded, and ſo being grown looſe while they were Anabaptiſts, to mend the matter, they grew Epicures when they had been inſtructed by the Libertines, and this was the

end of their new gotten comfort. Others I have known that have wanted Assurance, and falling among the Antinomians, were told by them that they undid themselves by looking after Signs and Marks of Grace, and so laying their comforts upon something in themselves; whereas they should look only to Christ for Comfort, and not at any thing in themselves at all: and for Assurance, it is only the Witness of the Spirit without any Marks, that must give it them; and to fetch Comfort from their own Graces and Obedience, was to make it themselves instead of Christ and the holy Ghost, and was a Legal way: No sooner was this Doctrine Received, but the Receivers had Comfort at will, and all was sealed up to them presently by the Witness of the Spirit in their own Conceits: Whence this came, judge you: I told you my judgement before. Sure I am that the sudden loosness of their lives, answering their ignorant, loose, ungospel-like doctrine did certifie me, that the spirit of Comfort was not their Comforter: For he is also a Spirit of Holiness, and comforteth men by the means of a holy Gospel, which hath precepts and threatnings as well as Promises.

2. And as the experience of the state of Believers assureth us that few of them attain to Certainty; so experience of the imperfection of their understanding shews us, that few of them are immediately capable of it. For how few believers be there that understand well, what is sound evidence, and what not? Nay how many Learned men have taught them, that the least unfeigned Desire of grace, is the Grace it self (as some say) or at least a certain evidence of it (as others say:) Whereas, alas, how many have unfeignedly desired many Graces, and yet have Desired

ſired the Glory and Profits of the world ſo much more, that they have miſcarried and periſhed? How many have taught them, that the leaſt unfeigned Love to God or to the Brethren, is a certain Mark of ſaving Grace? When as many a one hath unfeignedly loved God and the Brethren, who yet have loved houſe, land, credit, pleaſure, and life ſo much more, that God hath been thruſt as it were into a corner, and hath had but the worlds leavings, and the poor Saints have had little compaſſion or relief from them, nor would be lookt on in times of danger and diſgrace. As *Auſtin* and the Schoolmen uſe to ſay, Wicked men do *Uti Deo, & frui creaturis, Uſe God, and enjoy the creatures*; Godly men do *Frui Deo, & uti creaturis, Enjoy God, and uſe the creatures.* The meaning is, Both Regenerate and Unregenerate have ſome Will or Love, both to God and to the Creature: But the wicked to Will or Love the Creature as their chief Good, with their chiefeſt Love, and they only Love God as a Means to help them to the Creature, with a Love ſubordinate to their Love to the Creature. Whereas the godly do Will or Love God as their chief Good, with their chiefeſt Love or Complacency; and Love the Creature but as a Means to God, with an inferiour Love.

If then the nature of Sincerity be ſo little known, then Aſſurance of Sincerity cannot be very common. More might be ſaid to prove that Certainty of Salvation is not common among true Chriſtians; but that it is labour in vain, as to them, ſeeing experience and their own ready confeſſion doth witneſs it.

Now what's the uſe that I would have you make

of this? Why it is this: If Assurance of sincerity and Justification (much more of Salvation) be so rare among true Christians, then you have no cause to think that the want of it proveth you to be no true Christian. You see then that a man may be in a state of salvation without it; and that it is not Justifying Faith, as some have imagined, nor yet a necessary concomitant of that Faith. You see that you were mistaken in thinking that you had not the Spirit of Adoption, because you had no assuring witness within you effectively testifying to you that you are the child of God. All Gods children have the Spirit of Adoption: (For because they are Sons, therefore hath God sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they cry, *Abba Father*, *Gal.* 4. 6) But all Gods children have not Assurance of their Adoption; therefore the Spirit of Adoption doth not alwaies assure those of their Adoption in whom it abideth. It is alwaies a witness-bearer of their Adoption: But that is only objectively by his Graces and operations in them; as a Land-mark is a witness whose Land it is where it standeth: or as your sheep-mark witnesseth which be your sheep; or rather as a sensible Soul witnesseth a living Creature, or a rational Soul witnesseth that we are Men: But efficiently it doth not alwaies witness: as a Land-mark or Sheep-mark is not alway discerned: and a brute knows not it self to be a brute: and a man is not alwaies actually knowing his own humanity, nor can know it at all in the Womb, in Infancy, in Distraction, in an Epilepsie, Apoplexie, or the like disease, which depriveth him of the use of reason. Besides, it's no doubt, but the Apostle had some respect to the eminent gift of the Spirit, for Tongues,

Prophecies,

Prophecies, Miracles, and the like, which was proper to that age; though ſtill as including the Spirit of Holineſs.

You ſee then that you need not be alwaies in diſquiet when you want Aſſurance. For elſe how diſquiet a life ſhould moſt Chriſtians live! I ſhall ſhew you more anon, that all a mans comforts depend not ſo on his Aſſurance, but that he may live a comfortable life without it; Trouble of mind may be overcome; Conſcience may be quieted; True peace attained, yea a man may have that Joy in the holy Ghoſt, wherein the Kingdom of God is ſaid to conſiſt, without Certainty of Salvation. (If there be any paſſages in my Book of *Reſt*, Part 3. in preſſing to get Aſſurance, which ſeem contrary to this, I deſire that they may be reduced to this ſenſe, and no otherwiſe underſtood.) This ſhall be further opened anon, and other grounds of comfort manifeſted, beſides Aſſurance.

DIRECTION XV.

15. Yea this much more I would here inform you of, That *many holy, watchful and obedient Christians, are yet uncertain of their Salvation, even then when they are certain of their Justification and Sanctification; and that because they are uncertain of their perseverance and overcoming: For a mans Certainty of his Salvation can be no stronger than is his Certainty of enduring to the end and overcoming.*

THat you may not misunderstand me in this, observe 1. That I do not say perseverance is a thing uncertain in it self: 2. Nor that it is uncertain to all Christians: 3. But that it is uncertain to many, even strong and self-knowing Christians. Divines use to distinguish of the Certainty of the Object, and of the subject: and the former is either of the Object of Gods Knowledge, or of mans. I doubt not but God knows Certainly who shall be saved, which with his Decree doth cause that which we call Certainty of the Object as to mans understanding; But men themselves do not alwayes know it.

If a man have the fullest Certainty in the world that he is Gods child, yet if he be uncertain whether he shall so continue to the end, it is impossible that he should have a Certainty of his Salvation: For it is he only that endureth to the end that shall be saved.

Now

Now that many eminent Christians of great knowledge and much zeal and obedience are uncertain of their Perseverance, is proved by two Infallible Arguments. 1. By experience; If any should be so censorious as to think that none of all those Nations and Churches abroad that deny the Doctrine of Certain Perseverance of all Believers, have any strong Christians among them, yet we have had the knowledge of such at home. 2. Besides the Difficulty of the Subject is a clear Argument that a strong Christian may be uncertain of it. God hath made all those points plain in Scripture, which must be Believed as of Necessity to salvation: But the Certainty of all Believers Perseverance, is not a point of flat Necessity to Salvation to be Believed. Otherwise it would be a hard matter to prove that any considerable number were ever saved, till of late: or are yet saved, but in a very few Countries. It is a Point that the Churches never did put into their Creed; where they summed up those Points that they held necessary to Salvation. There are a great number of Texts of Scripture which seeming to intimate the contrary, do make the Point of great Difficulty to many of the wisest. And those Texts that are for it, are not so express as fully to satisfie them. Besides, that the examples of these ten years last past have done more to stagger many sober wise Christians in this Point, than all the Arguments that ever were used by Papists, Arminians, or any other: to see what kind of men in some places have fallen, and how far: as I am unwilling further to mention.

But I think by this time I have perswaded you that a proper Certainty of our salvation is not so common a thing as some controversal Doctors, or some self-conceited Professors do take it to be. And therefore

that you must not lay all your comfort on your Assurance of Salvation. As for them who are most highly confident both of the doctrine of the Certain Perseverance of every Believer, meerly upon tradition and prejudice, or else upon weak grounds which will not bear them out in their confidence; and are as confident of their own salvation on as slender grounds, having never well understood the Nature of saving Grace, Sincerity, Examination, nor Assurance; nor understood the causes of doubting, which might else have shaked them; I will not call their greatest confidence, by the name of Assurance or Certainty of Salvation, though it be accompanied with never so great boastings, or pretences, or expressions of the highest Joyes. And for your self I advise you first use those comforts which those may have who come short of Assurance.

DIRE-

DIRECTION. XVI.

16. The next thing which I would have you learn, is this, That *there are ſeveral grounds of the great Probability of our ſalvation, beſides the general grounds mentioned in the beginning: and by the Knowledge of theſe, without any further Aſſurance, a Chriſtian may live in much Peace and Comfort, and in Delightful, Deſirous thoughts of the Glory to come; And therefore the next work which you have to do, is to diſcover thoſe Probabilities of your Sincerity and your Salvation, and then to receive the Peace and Comfort which they may afford you, before you can expect Aſſurance it ſelf.*

I Shall here open to you the ſeveral parts of this Propoſition and Direction diſtinctly. 1. I told you in the beginning of the four grounds of Probability which all may have in general, from 1. The Nature of God. 2. And of the Mediatour, and his Office. 3. And the *univerſal* ſufficiency of Chriſts ſatisfaction. 4. And the general tenour of the Promiſe and offer of pardon and ſalvation. Now I add, that beſides all theſe, there are many grounds of ſtrong Probability, which you may have of your own Sincerity, and ſo of your particular Intereſt in Chriſt and ſalvation, when you cannot reach to a Certainty

1. Some

1. Some kind of Probability you may gather by comparing your ſelf with others. Though this way be but deluſory to unregenerate men, whoſe confidence is plainly contradicted by the Scriptures, yet may it be lawful and uſeful to an humble ſoul that is willing to obey and wait on God: I mean to conſider, that if ſuch as you ſhould periſh, how few People would God have in the world? Conſider firſt in how narrow a compaſs the Church was confined before Chriſts coming in the fleſh? and how carnal and corrupt even that viſible Church then was? and even at this day, the moſt Learned do compute, that if you divide the world into thirty parts, nineteen of them are Heatheniſh Idolaters, ſix of them are Mahometans, and only five of them are Chriſtians. And of theſe five that are Chriſtians, how great a part are of the Æthiopian, Greek and Popiſh Churches? ſo ignorant, rude and ſuperſtitious and erroneous, that ſalvation cannot be imagined to be near ſo eaſie or ordinary with them as with us: and of the Reformed Churches, commonly called Proteſtants, how ſmall is the number? And even among theſe, What a number are groſly ignorant and profane? and of thoſe that profeſs more knowledge and zeal, how many are groſly Erroneous, Schiſmatical and Scandalous? How exceeding ſmall a number is left then that are ſuch as you? I know this is no Aſſuring Argument; but I know withall that Chriſt dyed not in vain; but he will ſee the fruit of his ſufferings to the ſatisfaction of his ſoul: and the God of Mercy, who is a Lover of Mankind, will have a multitude innumerable of his ſaved ones in the earth.

2. But your ſtrongeſt Probabilities are from the Conſideration

Conſideration of the Work of God upon your ſouls, and the preſent frame and inclination of your ſoul to God. You may know that you have workings above nature in you; and that they have been kept alive and carryed on theſe many years againſt all oppoſition of the fleſh and the world: It hath not been a meer fleſh of Conviction which hath been extinguiſhed by ſenſuality, and left you in the darkneſs of ſecurity and prophaneneſs as others are. You dare not give up your Hopes of Heaven for all the world: You would not part with Chriſt, and ſay, Let him go, for all the pleaſures of ſin, or treaſures of the earth; If you had (as you have) an offer of God, Chriſt, Grace and Glory on one ſide, and worldly proſperity in ſin on the other ſide, you would chooſe God, and let go the other. You dare not, you would not give over Praying, Hearing, Reading and Chriſtian company, and give up your ſelf to worldly, fleſhly pleaſures; yet you are not Aſſured of ſalvation, becauſe you find not that Delight and Life in Duty, and that Witneſs of the Spirit, and that communion with God, nor that tenderneſs of heart, as you deſire. It is well that you deſire them: But though you be not Certain of Salvation, do not you ſee a great likelyhood, a Probability in all this? Is not your heart raiſed to a Hope that yet God is merciful to you, and means you good? Doubtleſs this you might eaſily diſcern.

The ſecond thing that I am to ſhew you is, that there may much ſpiritual Comfort and Peace of conſcience be enjoyed without any Certainty of Salvation, even upon theſe forementioned Probabilities. Which I prove thus, 1. No doubt but *Adam* in innocency had Peace of Conſcience, and Comfort

and

and Communion with God, and yet he had no Aſſurance of Salvation; I mean either of continuing in Paradiſe, or being tranſlated to Glory. For if he had, either he was ſure to perſevere in Innocency, and ſo to be glorified, (But that was not true) or elſe he muſt foreknow both that he ſhould fall and be raiſed again, and ſaved by Chriſt. But this he knew not at all. 2. Experience tells us that the greateſt part of Chriſtians on earth do enjoy that Peace and Comfort which they have, without any Certainty of their ſalvation. 3. The nature of the thing telleth us, that a likelihood of ſo great a mercy as everlaſting Glory muſt needs be a ground of great Comfort. If a poor condemned priſoner do but hear that there is Hopes of a Pardon, ſpecially if very probable, it will glad his heart. Indeed if an Angel from Heaven were brought into this ſtate, it would be ſad to him: But if a Devil or condemned ſinner have ſuch Hope, it muſt needs be glad news to them. The Devils have it not, but we have.

3. Let me next therefore intreat you to take the Comfort of your Probabilities of Grace and Salvation. Your horſe or dog knoweth not how you will uſe them Certainly; yet will they lovingly follow you, and put their heads to your hand, and truſt you with their lives without fear, and love to be in your company, becauſe they have found you kind to them, and have tried that you do them no hurt, but good; yea, though you do ſtrike them ſometimes, yet they find that they have their food from you, and your favour doth ſuſtain them. Yea, your little children have no Certainty how you will uſe them, and yet finding that you have alwaies uſed them kindly, and expreſſed Love to them, though you whip them ſometimes, yet are glad of your company, and

and deſire to be in your lap, and can truſt themſelves in your hands without tormenting themſelves with ſuch doubts as theſe, *I am uncertain how my Mother will uſe me, whether ſhe will wound me, or kill me, or turn me out of doors, and let me periſh.* Nature perſwades us not to be too diſtruſtful of thoſe that have alwaies befriended us, and eſpecially whoſe Nature is Merciful and Compaſſionate: Nor to be too ſuſpitious of evil from them that have alwaies done us good: Every man knows that the Good will do good, and the Evil will do you evil; and accordingly we expect that they ſhould do to us. Naturally we all fear a Toad, a Serpent, an Adder, a mad Dog, a wicked Man, a mad Man, a cruel blood-thirſty Tyrant, and the Devil: But no one fears a Dove, a Lamb, a good Man, a merciful compaſſionate Governour, except only the Rebels or notorious offenders that know he is bound in juſtice to deſtroy or puniſh them. And none ſhould fear diſtruſtfully the wrath of a gracious God, but they who will not ſubmit to his Mercy, and will not have Chriſt to reign over them, and therefore may know that he is bound in Juſtice, if they come not in, to deſtroy them. But for you that would be Obedient, and Reformed, and are troubled that you are no better, and beg of God to make you better, and have no ſin, but what you would be glad to be rid of, may not you, at leaſt, ſee a ſtrong Probability that it ſhall go well with you? O make uſe therefore of this Probability: and if you have but Hopes that God will do you good, rejoyce in thoſe Hopes till you can come to rejoyce in Aſſurance.

And here let me tell you that Probabilities are of divers Degrees, according to their divers Grounds. Where men have but a little Probability of their

Sincerity,

Sincerity, and a greater Probability that they are not Sincere in the Faith, these men may be somewhat born up, but it behoves them presently to search in fear, and to amend that which is the cause of their fear. Those that have more Probability of the sincerity of their hearts, than of the contrary, may well have more peace than trouble of mind: Those that have yet a higher Degree of Probability, may live in more joy, and so according to the Degree of Probability may their Comforts still arise.

And observe also that it is but the highest degree of this Probability here which we call a *Certainty*: For it is a Moral Certainty, and not that which is called *a Certainty of Divine faith*, nor that which is called *a Certainty of evidence* in the strictest sense; though yet evidence there is for it: But it is the same evidences materially which are the ground of Probability and of Certainty: Only sometime they differ Gradually (one having more Grace and another less) and sometime not so neither: For he that hath more Grace may discern but a Probability in it (through some other defect) no more than he that hath less: But when one man discerns his Graces and Sincerity but darkly, he hath but a Probability of Salvation manifested by them: and when another discerneth them more clearly, he hath a stronger Probability; and he that discerneth them most clearly (if other necessaries concur) hath that which we call a Certainty.

Now I am perswaded that you frequently see a strong Probability of your Sincerity; and may not that be a very great stay and comfort to your soul? Nay, may it not draw out your heart in Love, Delight and Thankfulness? Suppose that your name were written in a piece of paper, and put among an hundred,

hundred, or fifty, or but twenty other like papers into a Lottery, and you were certain that you ſhould be the owner of this whole Land except your name were drawn, the firſt time, and if it were drawn you ſhould die; Would your Joy or your Sorrow for this be the greater? Nay, if it were but ten to one, or but two to one odds on your ſide, it would keep you from drooping and diſcouragement: and why ſhould it not do ſo in the preſent caſe?

DIRECTION XVII.

17. My next Advice to you is this, *For the ſtrengthening your apprehenſions of the Probability of your Salvation; Gather up and improve all your choiceſt Experiences of Gods good will and mercy to you: And obſerve alſo the Experiments of others in the ſame kind.*

WE do God and our ſelves a great deal of wrong by forgetting, neglecting and not improving our Experiences. How doth God charge it on the Iſraelites, eſpecially in the Wilderneſs, that they forgot the Works of God, by which he had ſo often manifeſted his Power and Goodneſs? *Pſal.* 78. and 107. ſee 105, 106. When God had by one Miracle ſilenced their unbelief, they had forgotten it in the next diſtreſs. It was a ſign the Diſciples hearts were hardened, when they forgot the Miracles of the loaves, and preſently after were diſtruſtful and afraid, *Mark* 6. 52. God doth not give us his *mercies* only for the

the present *use*, but for the future: nor only for the body, but for the soul. I would this truth were well learned by Believers. You are in sickness, in troubles, and dangers, and pinching straits, in fears and anguish of mind: In this case you cry to God for help, and he doth in such a manner deliver you, as silenceth your distrust, and convinceth you of his love; at least of his readiness to do you good. What a wrong is it now to God and your self, to forget this presently, and in the next temptation to receive no strengthening by the consideration of it? Doth God so much regard this dirty flesh, that he should do all this meerly for its ease and relief? No, he doth it to kill your unbelief, and convince you of his special Providence, his care of you, and love to you, and power to help you, and to breed in you more loving, honourable and thankful thoughts of him: Lose this benefit, and you lose all: You may thus use one and the same Mercy an hundred times. Though it be gone as to the body; it is still fresh in a believing, thankful, careful soul. You may make as good use of it at your very death, as the first hour. But O the sad forgetfulness, mutability and unbelief of these hearts of ours! What a number of these choice experiences do we all receive? When we forget one, God giveth another, and we forget that too: When unbelief doth blasphemously suggest to us, *Such a thing may come once or twice by chance.* God addeth one experience to another, till it even shame us out of our unbelief, as Christ shamed *Thomas*, and we cry out, *My Lord and My God.* Hath it not been thus oft with you? Have not Mercies come so seasonably, so unexpectedly, either by small means, or the means themselves unexpectedly raised up; without your designing or effecting; and plainly in answer

anſwer to prayers, that they have brought conviction along with them? and you have ſeen the Name of God engraven on them? Sure it is ſo with us, when through our ſinful negligence, we are hardly drawn to open our eyes, and ſee what God is doing. Much more might we have ſeen if we had but obſerved the workings of Providence for us. Eſpecially they that are in an afflicted ſtate, and have more ſenſible daily uſe for God, and are awakened to ſeek him, and regard his dealings. I know a mercy to the body is no certain evidence of Gods Love to the ſoul, But yet from ſuch experiences a Chriſtian may have very ſtrong Probabilities. When we find God hearing Prayers, it is a hopeful ſign that we have ſome Intereſt in him. We may ſay, as *Manoah's* wife ſaid to him, *Judg.* 13. 23. *If the Lord had meant to deſtroy us, he would not have received a Sacriſice at our hands, nor have done all this for us.* To have God ſo near to us in all that we call upon him for, and ſo ready to relieve us; as if he could not deny an earneſt prayer, and could not endure to ſtop his ears againſt our cries and groans, theſe are hopeful ſigns that he meaneth us good. I know ſpecial Grace is the only Certain Evidence of ſpecial Love: But yet theſe kind of experiences are many times more effectual to refreſh a drooping doubting ſoul, than the firſt Evidences. For Evidences may be unſeen, and require a great deal of holy skill and diligence to try them, which few have; But theſe experiences are near us, even in our bodies, and ſhew themſelves; they make all our bones ſay, *Lord, who is like unto thee?* And it is a great advantage to have the help of ſenſe it ſelf for our Conſolation. I hope you yet remember

the choice particular Providences by which God hath manifeſted to you his Goodneſs, even from your youth till now: eſpecially his frequent anſwering of our prayers! Methinks theſe ſhould do ſomething to the diſpelling of thoſe black diſtruſtful thoughts of God. I could wiſh you would write them down, and oft review them. And when Temptations next come, remember with *David*, who helpt you againſt the Lion and the Bear, and therefore fear not the uncircumciſed Philiſtine.

2. And you may make great uſe alſo of the experiences of others. Is it not a great ſatisfaction to hear twenty, or forty, or an hundred Chriſtians, of the godlieſt Lives, to make the very ſame complaints as you do your ſelf? The very ſame complaints have I heard from as many. By this you may ſee your caſe is not ſingular, but the ordinary caſe of the tendereſt Conſciences: and of many that walk uprightly with God. And alſo is it not a great help to you, to hear other Chriſtians tell how they have come into thoſe troubles; and how they have got out of them? what hurt them? and what helped them? and how God dealt with them while they lay under them? How deſirous are diſeaſed perſons to talk with others that have had the ſame diſeaſe? and to hear them tell, how it took them, and how it held them, and ſpecially what cured them. Beſides, it will give you much ſtronger hopes of cure and recovery to peace of conſcience, when you hear of ſo many that have been cured of the ſame diſeaſe. Moreover, is it not a reviving thing, to hear Chriſtians open the Goodneſs of the Lord? and that in particular, as upon experience they have found him to their own ſouls? To hear them tell you of ſuch notable diſcoveries of Gods ſpecial providence and

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care of his people, as may refell all Temptations to Atheiſm and Unbelief? To hear them give you their frequent and full experiences of Gods hearing and anſwering their Prayers, and helping them in their diſtreſſes? Though the carnal part of the Mercy were only theirs, yet by improvement the ſpiritual part may be yours: You may have your faith, and love, and joy confirmed by the experiences of *David*, *Job*, *Paul*, which are paſt ſo long ago; and by the experiences of all your Godly acquaintance, as if they were your own. This is the benefit of the unity of the Church: the bleſſings of one member of the body are bleſſings to the reſt; and if one Rejoyce, the reſt may rejoyce with them, not only for their ſakes, but alſo for their own. Such as God is to the reſt of his children, ſuch he is and will be to you. He is as ready to pity you as them; and to hear your complaints and moans as theirs. And leſt we ſhould think that none of them were ſo bad as we; he hath left us the examples of his mercies to worſe than ever we were. You never were guilty of Witchcraft, and open Idolatry, as *Manaſſes* was, and that for a long time, and drawing the whole Nation, and chief part of the viſible Church on earth, into Idolatry with him. You never had your hand in the blood of a Saint, and even of the firſt Martyr (*Stephen*) as *Paul* had: You never hunted after the blood of the Saints, and perſecuted them from City to City as he did: and yet God did not only forgive him, but was found of him when he never ſought him, yea when he was perſecuting him in his Members, and kicking againſt the pricks; yea and made him a choſen Veſſel to bear about his Name, and as noble an Inſtrument of the Propagation of his Goſpel, as if he had never been guilty of any ſuch

crimes: that he might be an encouraging example to the *unworthiest sinners*, and in him might appear to the Riches of his Mercy, 1 *Tim.* 3. 13, 16. see also *Titus* 3. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Is there no ground of comfort in these examples of the Saints? The same we may say of the experiences of Gods people still; And doubtless it were well if experimental Christians did more fully and frequently open to one another their experiences. It were the way to make private particular Mercies to be more publick and common Mercies; and to give others a part in our blessings without any diminution of them to our selves. Not that I would have this so openly and rashly done, (by those who through their disability to express their minds, do make the works and language of Spirit seem ridiculous to carnal ears) as I perceive some in a very formality would have it (as if it must be one of their Church-customs, to satisfie the society of the fitness of each member before they will receive them:) But I would have Christians that are fit to express their minds, to do it in season, and with wisdom: Especially those to whom God hath given any more eminent and notable experiments, which may be of publick use. Doubtless, God hath lost very much of the honour due to his Name, and poor Christians much of the benefit which they might have received, (and may challenge by the mutual interest of fellow-members) for want of the publick communication of the extraordinary and more notable experiences of some men. Those that write the lives of the holiest men when they are dead, can give you but the outside and carkass of their Memorials; The most observable passages are usually secret, known only to God and their own souls; which none but themselves are able to communicate.

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For my own part, I do ſoberly and ſeriouſly profeſs to you, that the experiences I have had of Gods ſpecial Providences, and Fatherly care, and ſpecially of his hearing prayers, have been ſo ſtrange, and great, and exceeding numerous, that they have done very much to the quieting of my ſpirit, and the perſwading of my ſoul of Gods Love to me, and the ſilencing and ſhaming of my unbelieving heart, and eſpecially for the conquering of all temptations that lead to Atheiſm or Infidelity, to the denying of ſpecial Providence, or of the verity of the Goſpel, or of the Neceſſity of holy prayer and worſhipping of God. Yea, thoſe paſſages that in the bulk of the thing ſeem to have no great matter in them, yet have come at ſuch ſeaſons, in ſuch a manner, in evident anſwer to prayers, that they have done much to my confirmation. O happy Afflictions and Diſtreſſes! Sufferings and Danger force us to pray, and force the cold and cuſtomary Petitioner to ſeriouſneſs and importunity. Importunate Prayers bring evident returns; ſuch returns give us ſenſible experiences; ſuch experiences raiſe faith, love, and thankfulneſs; kill Unbelief and Atheiſm; and encourage the ſoul in all diſtreſſes to go the ſame way as when it ſped ſo well. I often pitty the poor ſeduced Infidels of this age that deny Scripture and Chriſt himſelf, and doubt of the uſefulneſs of Prayer and holy Worſhip; and I wiſh that they had but the experiences that I have had. O how much more might it do than all their Studies and Diſputes! Truly I have once or twice had motions in my mind to have publickly and freely communicated by experiences in a Relation of the more obſervable paſſages of my Life: But I found that I was not able to do it to Gods praiſe as was meet, without a ſhew of oſtentation and vanity, and therefore I forbore.

DIRECTION XVIII.

18. Next, that you may yet further understand the true Nature of Assurance, Faith, Doubting and Desperation, I would have you observe this; *That God doth not command every man, nor properly any man ordinarily by his Word, to Believe that his sins are forgiven, and himself is justified, adopted, and shall be saved. But he hath prescribed a way by which they may attain to Assurance of these, in which way it is mens Duty to seek it: So that our Assurance is not properly that which is called A Certainty of Belief.*

I Have said enough for the proof of this Proposition in the third Part of my Book of Rest, *Chap.* 11. whither I must refer you. But there is more to be said yet for the Application of it. But first I must briefly tell you the meaning of the words. 1. God commandeth us all to believe (wicked and godly) that our sins are made pardonable by the sufficient satisfaction of Christ for them: and that God is very merciful and ready to forgive: and that he hath conditionally forgiven us all in the new Covenant, making a deed of gift of Christ, and pardon, and Life in him to all, on condition they believe in him, and Accept what is given. 2. But no man is commanded to believe that he is Actually forgiven. 3. Therefore I say our Assurance is not strictly to be called Belief,

Belief, or a Certainty of Belief. For it is only our Certain Belief of thoſe things which we take on the meer credit of the Witneſſer, or Revealer, which we call Certainty of Faith. Indeed we commonly in Engliſh uſe the word Belief, to expreſs any confident, but uncertain opinion or perſwaſion: And if any will ſo take it, then I deny not but our Aſſurance is a belief. But it is commonly taken by Divines for an Aſſent to any thing on the credit of the word of the Revealer; and ſo is diſtinguiſhed both from the ſenſible Apprehenſion of things, and from Principles that are known by the meer Light and help of Nature; and from the knowledge of Concluſions which by Reaſoning we gather from thoſe Principles. Though yet one and the ſame thing may be Known as Revealed in Nature, and believed as revealed immediately or Supernaturally. And ſo we both Know and believe that there is one only God, who made and preſerveth All things. 4. But our Aſſurance is an Act of Knowledge, participating of Faith and internal ſenſe or Knowledge reflect. For Divine Faith ſaith, *He that Believeth is Juſtified, and ſhall be Saved.* Internal ſenſe and knowledge of our ſelves ſaith, *But I Believe.* Reaſon, or Diſcurſive Knowledge ſaith, *Therefore I am Juſtified and ſhall be ſaved.*

Only I muſt adviſe you, that you be not troubled when you meet with that which is contrary to this in any great Divines: For it is only our former Divines, whoſe Judgements were partly hurt by hot Diſputations with the Papiſts herein, and partly not come to that maturity as others ſince them have had opportunity to do. And therefore in their Expoſitions of the Creed, and ſuch like paſſages in the Text, they eagerly inſiſt on it, that when we ſay, We *Believe the Forgiveneſs of ſin, and life everloſting,*

lasting, every man is to profeſs that he Believeth that his own ſins are forgiven, and he ſhall have Life everlaſting himſelf. But our latter Divines, and ſpecially the Engliſh, and moſt eſpecially theſe that deal moſt in Practicals, do ſee the miſtake, and lay down the ſame doctrine which I teach you here: Gods bids us not Believe as from him, more than he hath revealed. But only one of the Propoſitions is revealed by Gods Teſtimony, *He that believeth ſhall be Saved.* But it is no where written that *You do Believe*, nor that *You ſhall be Saved*; nor any thing equivalent. And therefore you are not commanded to Believe either of theſe. How the Spirit revealeth theſe, I have fully told you already. In our Creed therefore we do profeſs to believe remiſſion of ſins to be Purchaſed by Chriſts death, and in his Power to give, and Given in the Goſpel to All on Condition of believing in Chriſt himſelf for Remiſſion: But not to believe that our own ſins are Actually and Fully Pardoned.

My end in telling you this again (which I have told you elſewhere) is this, That you may not think (as I find abundance of poor troubled ſouls to do) that Faith (much leſs Juſtifying Faith) is a believing that you have true Grace, and ſhall be ſaved; And ſo fall a condemning your ſelf unjuſtly every time that you doubt of your own Sincerity; and think that ſo much as you doubt of this, ſo much unbelief you have: and ſo many poor ſouls complain that they have no faith, or but little, and that they cannot believe, becauſe they believe not their own Faith to be Sincere: and when they wholly judge themſelves unſanctified, then they call that Deſperation, which they think to be a ſin inconſiſtent with true

Grace.

Grace. Theſe are dangerous Errours, all ariſing from that one Errour which the heat of contention did carry ſome good men to, that Faith is a belief that our ſins are forgiven by Chriſt. Indeed all men are bound to apply Chriſt and the Promiſe to themſelves. But that Application conſiſteth in a belief that this Promiſe is true as belonging to all, and ſo to me, and then in Acceptance of Chriſt and his benefits as an offered gift; and after this in truſting on him for the full performance of his Promiſe. Hence therefore you may beſt ſee what Unbelief and Deſperation are, and how far men may charge themſelves with them. When you doubt whether the Promiſe be True, or when you refuſe to Accept Chriſt and his Benefits offered in it, and conſequently to Truſt him as one that is Able and Willing to ſave you, if you do Aſſent to his Truth, and Accept him; this is Unbelief. But if you do believe the Truth of the Goſpel, and are heartily Willing to Accept Chriſt as offered in it, and only Doubt whether your belief and Acceptance of him be ſincere, and ſo whether you ſhall be ſaved, this is not Unbelief, but ignorance of your own Sincerity, and its conſequents. Nay, and though that Affiance be wanting, which is a part of Faith, yet it is but an hindering of the exerciſe of it, for want of a neceſſary concomitant condition; for the Grace of Affiance in the Habit, and Virtually is there: ſo that it is not formally Diſtruſt or Unbelief any more than your not Truſting God in your ſleep is Diſtruſt. If a friend do Promiſe to give you an hundred pound on condition that you thankfully Accept it: If you now do believe him, and do thankfully Accept it; but yet through ſome vain ſcruple ſhall think, *My thankfulneſs is ſo ſmall,*

that

that it is not ſincere, and therefore I doubt I do not perform his condition, and ſo ſhall never have the gift; in this caſe now you do believe your friend, and you do not diſtruſt him properly; but you Diſtruſt your ſelf, that you perform not the condition; and this hindereth the exercile of that Confidence or Affiance in your friend which is habitually and virtually in you. Juſt ſo is it in our preſent caſe.

The ſame may be ſaid of Deſperation, which is a Privation of Hope; When we have believed the Truth of the Goſpel, and Accepted Chriſt offered, we are then bound to Hope that God will give us the benefits promiſed: So hope is nothing but *a deſirous expectation* of the good ſo promiſed and believed. Now if you begin to diſtruſt whether God will make good this promiſe or no, either thinking that it is not true, or he is not able, or hath changed his mind ſince the making of it, and on theſe grounds you let go your Hopes, this is Deſpair. If becauſe that Chriſt ſeems to Delay his coming, we ſhould ſay, I have waited in Hope till now, but now I am out of Hope that ever Chriſt will come to Judge the World, and Glorifie Believers, I will expect it no longer: this is Deſpair. And it hath its ſeveral Degrees more or leſs, as unbelief hath. Indeed the Schoolmen ſay that Affiance is nothing but ſtrengthened Hope. Affiance in the propereſt ſenſe is the ſame in ſubſtance with Hope; only it more expreſſeth a Reſpect to the Promiſe and Promiſer, and indeed is Faith and Hope expreſt both together in one word. So that what I ſaid before of Diſtruſt, is true of Deſpair. If you do continue to believe the Truth of the Goſpel, and particularly of Chriſts coming and glorifying his Saints, and yet you think he will not glorifie you,

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becauſe you think that you are not a true believer or Saint. This is not Deſperation in the proper ſenſe. For Deſperation is the privation of Hope, where the formal cauſe, the heart and life of it is wanting. But you have here Hope in the habit, and Virtually do hope in Chriſt: but the Act of it, as to your own particular ſalvation is hindered, upon an accidental miſtake. In the forementioned example, If your friend promiſe to give you an hundred pound on condition of your thankful Acceptance, and promiſeth to come at ſuch an hour and bring it you: If now you ſtay till the hour be almoſt come, and then ſay, *I am out of Hope of his coming now; he hath broke his word*; this is properly a Deſpair in your friend. But if you only think that you have overſtaid the time, and that it is paſt, and therefore you ſhall not have the gift, this may be called a Deſpair of the event, and a Deſpair in your ſelf, but not properly a Deſpair of your friend: only the Act of Hoping in God is hindered, as is ſaid. So it is in our preſent caſe. Men may be ſaid to Deſpair of their Salvation, and to Deſpair in themſelves, but not to Deſpair in God, except the formal cauſe of ſuch Deſpair were there preſent; and except they are drawn to it, by not believing his Truth and Faithfulneſs. The true nature of Deſpair is expreſt in that of the Apoſtles, *Luke* 24. 21. *We truſted that this must be that ſhould Redeem Iſrael:* Only it was but imperfect Deſpair: elſe it had been damnable. Their hopes were ſhaken. And for my part, I am perſwaded that it is only this proper Deſpair in God, which is the damnable Deſperation, which is threatned in the Scripture: and not the former: And that if a poor ſoul ſhould go out of this world without any

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Actual Hope of his own Salvation, meerly becauſe he thinks that he is no true Believer, that this ſoul may be ſaved, and prove a true Believer for all this. Alas, the great ſin that God threatneth, is our Diſtruſt of his Faithfulneſs, and not the doubting of our own ſincerity and diſtruſt of our ſelves. We have great reaſon to be very jealous of our own hearts, as knowing them to be Deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked, who can know them? But we have no reaſon at all to be Jealous of God. Where find you in Scripture that any is condemned for hard thoughts of themſelves, or for not knowing themſelves to have true Grace, and for thinking they had none? It is true, unbelief in Gods Promiſe that men are condemned for: even that ſin which is an Averſion of the Soul from God. But perhaps you will ask, Is doubting of our own Sincerity and Salvation no ſin? I anſwer, Doubting is either taken in oppoſition to believing, or in oppoſition to knowing, or to conjecturing.

1. Doubting as it ſignifieth only A *not-believing* that our ſins are pardoned, and we ſhall be ſaved, is no ſin (ſtill remember that I take believing in the ſtrict proper ſenſe, for *The Crediting of a Divine Teſtimony or Aſſertion*) For God hath no where commanded us ordinarily to believe either of theſe. I ſay *Ordinarily* (as I did in the propoſition before) becauſe when Chriſt was on earth he told a man perſonally, *Thy ſins are forgiven thee*: (whether he meant only as to the preſent diſeaſe inflicted for them, or alſo all puniſhment Temporal and Eternal, I will not now diſcuſs) ſo *Nathan* from God told *David*, *His ſin was forgiven*: But theſe were Priviledges only to theſe perſons, and

not

not common to all. God hath no where ſaid, either that All mens ſins are actually forgiven; or that yours or mine by name are forgiven: But only that All that believe are forgiven; which ſuppoſeth them to believe before they are forgiven, and that they may be forgiven, and therefore it is not true that they are forgiven before they believe: and therefore this faith is not a believing *that they are forgiven*, but a believing on Chriſt for forgiveneſs. Elſe men muſt believe an Untruth, to make it become True by their believing it.

2. But now *Doubting*, as it is oppoſed to the *Knowledge* of our Remiſſion and Juſtification, in thoſe that are Juſtified is a ſin: (For it can be no ſin for an unjuſtified perſon to know that he is unjuſtified) But then, I pray you mark, how far it is a ſin in the Godly, and what manner of ſin it is. 1. It is a ſin, as it is part of our natural ignorance, and original Depravedneſs of our Underſtandings, or a fruit hereof, and of our ſtrangeneſs to our own hearts, and of their deep Deceitfulneſs, Confuſion, Mutability or Negligence. 2. And further, as all theſe are increaſed by long cuſtom in ſinning, and ſo the diſcerning of our ſtates is become more difficult, it is yet a greater ſin. 3. It is a ſin as it is the fruit of any particular ſin by which we have obſcured our own graces, and provoked God to hide his face from us. And ſo all ignorance of any Truth which we ought to know, is a ſin, ſo the ignorance of our own Regeneration and Sincerity is a ſin, becauſe we ought to know it. But this is ſo far from being the great condemning ſin of unbelief which Chriſt threatneth in his New Law, that it is none of the greateſt or moſt hainous ſort of ſins, but the infirmity in ſome meaſure of every Chriſtian.

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And let me further acquaint you with this difference between these *Doubtings*, and your *Fears and Sorrows* that follow thereupon. Though the Doubting it self be your sin, yet I suppose that the Fears, and Sorrows, and Cares that follow it may be your duty. Yet Respectively, and by remote participation even these also must be acknowledged sinful; even as our prayers for that pardon which we have received and knew it not, may by remote participation be called sinful; because if we had not sinned we should not have been ignorant of our own hearts: and if we had not been ignorant, we should not have doubted of the least true Grace we have: and if we had not so doubted, we should not have feared, or sorrowed, or prayed for that Remission in that sense. But yet though these may be called sinful, as they come from sin, yet more nearly and in themselves considered, on supposition of our present estate, they are all duties, and great duties necessary to our Salvation. You may say to a Thief that beg for pardon, *If thou hadst not stoln thou hadst not need to have begg'd pardon.* Yet supposing that he hath stoln, it may be his duty to beg pardon. And so you may say to a poor fearing soul, that fears damnation and Gods wrath, *Thou needest not fear if thou hadst not sinned.* But when he hath once by sin obscured his evidences, and necessitated doubting, then is fear, and sorrow, and praying for Justification and Pardon, his duty; And indeed not fitly to be called sin, but rather a fruit of sin in one respect (and so hath some participation in it) but a fruit of the Spirit, and of Christs command in another respect, and so a necessary duty. For else we should say, that it is a sin to Repent and believe in Christ, and to love him as Redeemer; For you may say to any

any ſinner, *Thou needeſt not to have Repented, Believed in a Redeemer, &c. but for thy ſin*; Yet I hope none will ſay, that ſo doing is properly a ſin, though doing them defectively is. God doth not will and approve of it, that any ſoul that can ſee no ſigns of Grace and Sincerity in it ſelf ſhould yet be as confident, and merry, and careleſs, as if they were certain that all were well. God would not have men doubt of his Love, and yet make light of it; This is a contempt of him. Elſe what ſhould poor carnal ſinners do that find themſelves unſanctified. No nor doth God expect that any man ſhould judge of himſelf better than he hath evidence to warrant ſuch a judgement: But that every man ſhould *prove his own work, that ſo he may have rejoycing in himſelf alone, and not in another. For he that thinketh he is ſomething when he is nothing, deceiveth himſelf*, *Gal.* 6. 3, 4, 5, 6. And no man ſhould be a ſelf-deceiver, eſpecially in a caſe of ſuch unexpreſſible conſequence. It is therefore a moſt deſperate doctrine of the Antinomians (as moſt of theirs are) that all men ought to believe Gods ſpecial Love to them, and their own Juſtification: and that they are juſtified by Believing that they were juſtified before: and that no man ought to queſtion his faith (faith *Saltmarſh*, any more than to queſtion Chriſt:) and that all fears of our damnation, or not being Juſtified after this believing, are ſin: and thoſe that perſwade to them, are Preachers of the Law, (*How punctually do the moſt prophane ungodly people, hold moſt points of the Antinomian belief, though they never knew that Sect by name!*) God commandeth no man to believe more than is true: nor immediately to caſt away their doubts and fears; but to overcome them in an orderly methodical way: that is, uſing Gods

Gods means till their Graces become more diſcernable, and their underſtandings more clear and fit to diſcern them, that ſo we may have Aſſurance of their ſincerity, and thereby, of our Juſtification, Adoption, and right to Glorification, *Heb.* 4. 1. *Let us therefore fear, leſt a Promiſe being left of entring into his Reſt, any of us ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it.* Pſal. 2. 11. *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoyce before him with trembling; Kiſs the Son leſt he be angry, and ye periſh.* Phil. 2. 12. *Work out your Salvation with fear and trembling.* Not only 1. A reverent fear of Gods Majeſty. 2. And a filial fear of offending him. 3. And an awful fear of his Judgements, when we ſee them executed on others, and hear them threatned. 4. And a filial fear of temporal chaſtiſements are lawful and our duty: but alſo, 5. A fear of damnation exciting to moſt careful importunity to eſcape it; whenever we have ſo far obſcured our evidences, as to ſee no ſtrong probability of our ſincerity in the faith, and ſo of our ſalvation. The ſumm of my ſpeech therefore is this: Do not think that all your fears of Gods wrath are your ſins; Much of them is your great duty. Do you not feel that God made theſe fears at your firſt converſion, the firſt and a principal means of your Recovery? to drive you to a ſerious conſideration of your ſtate and waies, and to look after Chriſt with more longing and eſtimation? and to uſe the means with more reſolution and diligence? Have not theſe fears been chief preſervers of your diligence and integrity ever ſince? I know love ſhould do more than it doth with us all: But if we had not daily uſe for both (Love and Fear) God would not 1. Have planted them both in our natures. 2. And have renewed them both by regenerating Grace. 3. And have put into his word

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the objects to move both (*viz.* Threatnings as well as Promiſes) That fear of God which is the beginning of wiſdom includeth the fear of his threatned wrath. I could ſay abundance more to prove this, but that I know as to you it is needleſs for conviction of it: but remember the uſe of it. Do not put the name of unbelief upon all your fears of Gods diſpleaſure. Much leſs ſhould you preſently conclude that you have no faith, and that you cannot believe, becauſe of theſe fears. You may have much faith in the midſt of theſe fears; and God may make them preſervers of your faith, by quickning you up to that means that muſt maintain it, and by keeping you from thoſe evils that would be as a worm at the root of it, and eat out its precious ſtrength and life. Security is no friend to faith; but a deadlier enemy than fear it ſelf. *Obj.* Then *Cain* and *Judas* ſinned not by deſpairing: or at leaſt not damnably. *Anſw.* 1. They deſpaired not only of themſelves, and of the event of their ſalvation, but alſo of God; of his Power or Goodneſs, and Promiſe, and the ſufficiency of any ſatisfaction of Chriſt. Their Infidelity was the root of their deſpair. 2. Far is it from me to ſay or think that you ſhould deſpair of the event, or that it is no ſin; yea or that you ſhould cheriſh cauſeleſs and exceſſive jealouſies and fears: I ſhall ſhew you towards the end, the ſinfulneſs of ſo doing. Take heed of all fears that drive you from God, or that diſtract or weaken your ſpirit, or diſable you from duty, or drown your love to God, and delight in him, and deſtroy your apprehenſions of Gods Lovelineſs and Compaſſion, and raiſe black and hard, and unworthy thoughts of God in your mind. Again, I intreat you avoid and abhor all ſuch fears.

But if you find in you the fears of godly jealouſie of your own heart, and ſuch moderated fears of the wrath of God, which baniſh ſecurity, preſumption and boldneſs in ſinning, and are (as D. *Sibs* calls them) the awe-band of your ſoul; and make you fly to the merits and boſom of the Lord Jeſus, as the affrighted child to the lap of the Mother, and as the man-ſlayer under the Law to the City of refuge, and as a man purſued by a Lion, to his Sanctuary or hold: do not think you have no faith, becauſe you have theſe fears; but moderate them by faith and love, and then thank God for them. Indeed *Perfect love* (which will be in Heaven when all is perfected) will caſt out this fear; and ſo it will do ſorrow and care, and prayer and means. But ſee you lay not theſe by till *Perfect love* caſt them out. See *Jer.* 5. 22, 23. and *Heb.* 12. two laſt verſes. *Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us ſerve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a conſuming fire.*

I am ſenſible that I am too large on theſe foregoing heads; I will purpoſely ſhorten the reſt, leſt I weary you.

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DIRECTION. XIX.

19. Further underſtand, That *thoſe few who do attain to Aſſurance, have it not either perfectly or conſtantly* (for the moſt part) *but mixt with imperfection, and oft clouded and interrupted.*

THat the higheſt Aſſurance on earth is imperfect, I have ſhewed you elſewhere. If we be imperfect, and our faith imperfect, and the knowledge of our own hearts imperfect, and all our evidences and graces imperfect; then our Aſſurance muſt needs be imperfect alſo. To dream of perfection on earth, is to dream of Heaven on earth: And if Aſſurance may be here perfect, why not all our Graces? Even when all Doubtings are overcome, yet is Aſſurance far ſhort of the higheſt degree.

Beſides that meaſure of Aſſurance which godly men do partake of, hath here its many ſad interruptions, in the moſt. Upon the prevalency of Temptations, and the hidings of Gods face, their ſouls are oft left in a ſtate of ſadneſs, that were but lately as in the arms of Chriſt. How fully might this be proved from the examples of *Job*, *David*, *Jeremy*, and others in Scripture? and much more abundantly by the daily complaints and examples of the beſt of Gods people now living among us. As there is no perfect *evenneſs* to be expected in our obedience while we are on earth; ſo neither will there be any conſtant or perfect *evenneſs* in our

comforts. He that hath life in one duty, is cold in the next: and therefore he that hath much joy in one duty, hath little in the next. Yea perhaps duty may but occasion the renewal of his sorrows; that the soul who before felt not its own burden at a Sermon, or in Prayer, or holy Meditation, which were wont to revive him, now seems to feel his miseries to be multiplied. The time was once with *David*, when the thoughts of God were sweet to him, and he could say, *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul*. And yet he saw the time also when he remembred God and was troubled, he complained, and his spirit was overwhelmed: God so held his eyes waking, that he was troubled and could not speak: he considered the daies of old, and the years of ancient time; he called to remembrance his song in the night, he communed with his own heart, and his spirit made diligent search: *Will the Lord*, saith he, *cast off forever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercy?* Was not this a low ebb, and a sad case that *David* was in? Till at last he saw, This was his infirmity, *Psal.* 77. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Had *David* no former experiences to remind? no arguments of comfort to consider of? Yes, but there is at such a season an incapacity to improve them: There is not only a want of comfort, but a kind of averseness from it: The soul bendeth it self to break its own Peace, and to put away comfort far from it. So saith he in *vers.* 2. *My soul refused to be comforted.* In such cases, men are witty to argue themselves into distress; that it is hard for one that would comfort them to answer them;

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and they are witty in refelling all the Arguments of comfort that you can offer them; ſo that it is hard to faſten any thing on them. They have a weak wilfulneſs againſt their own Conſolations.

Seeing then that the beſt have ſuch ſtorms and ſad interruptions, do not you wonder or think your caſe ſtrange if it be ſo with you. Would you ſpeed better than the beſt? Long for Heaven then, where only is joy without ſorrow, and everlaſting *Reſt* without interruption.

DIRECTION XX.

20. Let me alſo give you this warning, That *you muſt never expect ſo much Aſſurance on Earth, as ſhall ſet you above the Poſſibility of the loſs of Heaven; or above all apprehenſions of real danger of your miſcarrying.*

I Conceive this advertiſement to be of great neceſſity. But I muſt firſt tell you the meaning, and then the reaſons of it. Only I am ſorry that I know not how to expreſs it fully, but in School-terms, which are not ſo familiar to you. 1. That which ſhall certainly come to paſs we call a thing [*Future.*] That which May and Can be done we call [*Poſſible.*] *All* things are not Future which are Poſſible: God *can* do more than he *hath* done or *will* do. He could have made more worlds, and ſo more were Poſſible than were Future. Moreover a thing is ſaid to be Poſſible in reference to ſome

Power which can accompliſh it; whether it be Gods Power, or Angels, or Mans. God hath Decreed that none of his Elect ſhall finally or totally fall away and periſh: and therefore their ſo falling and periſhing is not future, that is, It is a thing that ſhall never come to paſs: But God never Decreed that it ſhould be utterly *Impoſſible*, and therefore it ſtill remaineth Poſſible, though it ſhall never come to paſs. *Obj.* But it is ſaid, *They ſhall deceive if it were Poſſible the very Elect.* A moſt comfortable place which many oppoſers of Election and Free Grace, do in vain ſeek to obſcure. But let me tell you for the right underſtanding of it. 1. That as I ſaid, [*Poſſible*] and [*Impoſſible*] are Relative terms, and have Relation to the Power of ſome Agent, as proportioned to the thing to be Done. Now this Text ſpeaks only of the power of falſe Chriſts, and falſe Prophets (and the Devil by them) Their power of Deceiving is exceeding great, but not great enough to Deceive the Elect: which is true in two Reſpects, 1. Becauſe the Elect are guided and fortified by Gods Spirit. 2. Becauſe ſeducers work not efficiently, but finally by propounding objects; or by a Moral improper efficiency only. All their ſeducements cannot force or neceſſitate us to be Deceived by them. But though it be impoſſible to them to do it; yet it is Poſſible to God to permit (which yet he never will) and ſo Poſſible for our ſelves to be our own Deceivers, or to give Deceivers ſtrength againſt us, by a wilfull receiving of their poiſoned baits. 2. Beſides Chriſt ſpoke not in *Ariſtotles* School, but among the Vulgar, where words muſt be uſed in the common ſenſe, or elſe they will not be underſtood: And the Vulgar uſe to call that *Impoſſible* which ſhall never come to paſs.

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There is a Conſequential Impoſſibility of the Event, becauſe it is directly impoſſible that God ſhould be mutable or deceived; even as contingents may be conſequentially and accidentally neceſſary: But in its own nature alas our Apoſtacy is more than Poſſible.

And indeed when we ſay that it is Poſſible or Impoſſible for a man to ſin or fall away, there is ſome degree of Impropriety in the Terms; becauſe *Poſſible* and *Impoſſible* are terms properly relating to ſome power apportioned to a work: but ſinning and falling away thereby, are the conſequents of impotency, and not the effects of Power: except we ſpeak of the natural act, wherein the ſin abideth. But this muſt be born with, for want of a fitter word to expreſs our meaning by. But I will leave theſe things which are not fit for you, and deſire you to leave them and overpaſs them, if you underſtand them not.

2. I here told you alſo, that you muſt not look to be above all apprehenſion of danger of your miſcarrying. The grounds of this are theſe: 1. Becauſe as is ſaid, our miſcarrying remaineth ſtill Poſſible. 2. Becauſe the perfect certain knowledge of our Election, and that we ſhall not fall away, is proper to God only: We have our ſelves but a Defective interrupted Aſſurance of it. 3. The Covenant gives us ſalvation but on condition of our perſeverance, and perſeverance on condition that we quench not the Spirit, which we ſhall do, if we loſe the apprehenſion of our danger. 4. Accordingly there is a connexion in our Aſſurance, between all the ſeveral cauſes of our Salvation, and neceſſaries thereto; whereof the apprehenſion of danger is one. We are ſure we ſhall be ſaved, if we be ſure to perſe-

vere: else not. We are sure to Persevere, if we be sure faithfully to resist Temptations. We can be no surer of faithful resisting of Temptations, than we are sure to be kept in an apprehension of our danger.

I still say therefore, that the Doctrine of Antinomians is the most ready way to Apostacy and Perdition: and no wonder if it lead to the Licentiousness and Scandals which our eyes have seen to be its genuine fruits! They cry down the weakness, unbelief and folly of poor Christians, that will apprehend themselves in danger of falling away, and so live in fear, after they are once Justified; and that if they fall into sin (as whoredom, drunkenness, murder, perjury, destroying the Ministry, and expelling the Gospel, &c.) will presently question or fear their estates and their Justification. Such like passages I lately read in some printed Sermons of one of my ancient acquaintance, who would never have come to that pass that he is at now, if his Judgement and Humility had been as great as his Zeal. I intreat you therefore never to expect such an Assurance as shall extinguish all your apprehensions of danger. He that sees not the danger, is neareſt it, and likely to fall into it. Only he that seeth and apprehendeth it, is likely to avoid it. He that seeth no danger of falling away, is in greatest danger of it. I doubt not but that's the cause of the Seditions, Scandals, Heresies, Bloodguiltiness, Destroyers of the Churches of Christ, and most Horrid Apostacies, Hypocrisie and wickedness, which these late times have been guilty of; that they apprehended not the danger of ever coming into such a state, or ever doing such things, but would have said, *Am I a Dog?* to him that should have foretold

told them what is come to pass. Wonderful! that men should be so blinded by false Doctrine, as not to know that the apprehension of danger is made in the very fabrication of the nature of man, to be the very engine to move his soul in all waies of self-preservation and salvation! Yea it is that very supposed principle, upon which all the Government of the world, and the Laws and order of every Nation, are grounded. We could not keep the very Bruits from tearing us in pieces, but for their own safety: because they apprehend themselves to be in danger by it; The fear of man is it that restraineth them. But for this, no mans life would be in any safety; For every malicious man would be a murderer; He that feareth not the loss of his own life, is Master of another mans. Do these men think that the apprehension of bodily dangers may carry them on through all undertakings, and be the potent spring of most of their actions, and warrant all those courses that else would be unwarrantable, so that they dare plead *Necessity* to warrant those fearful things which by extenuating language (like *Sauls*) are called *Irregularities!* And yet that it is unlawful or unmeet for a Christian, yea, the weakest Christian, to live in any apprehensions of danger to their souls? either danger of sinning, or falling away, or perishing for ever? No wonder if such do sin, and fall away and perish. Would these men have fought well by Sea or Land, if they had apprehended no danger? Would the earth have been so covered with carkasses and with blood (yea even of Saints) and the world filled with the doleful calamities that accompanied and have followed, if there had been no apprehensions of danger: Would they take Physick when they are sick?

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Would they avoid fire, or water, or thieves, but through an apprehenſion of danger? Let them talk what they pleaſe, if ever they eſcape Hell, without a deep apprehenſion of the danger of it, it muſt be in a way not known by Scripture, or by Nature. Sure I am *Paul* did tame his body, and bring it in ſubjection, through an apprehenſion of this danger, leſt when he had Preached to others, himſelf ſhould be a caſt-away or reprobate, 2 *Cor.* 9. 27. And Chriſt himſelf, when he biddeth us, *Fear not them that can kill the body* (whom yet theſe men think it lawful to fear and fight againſt) yet chargeth us with a double charge; ſo *Fear him that is able to deſtroy both body and ſoul in Hell: yea I ſay unto you,* ſaith Chriſt, *fear him, Luke* 12. 5. What can be plainer? and to his Diſciples? My deteſtation of theſe deſtructive Antinomian Principles, makes me to run out further againſt them than I intended: Though it were eaſie more abundantly to manifeſt their hatefulneſs: But my reaſons are theſe: 1. Becauſe theſe Mountebanks are ſtill thruſting in themſelves, and impudently proclaiming their own skill, and the excellency of their remedies for the cure of wounded conſciences, and the ſettling of peace; when indeed their receipts are rank poiſon, guilded with the precious Name of Chriſt, and Free Grace. 2. Becauſe I would not have your doubtings cured by the Devil; for he will but cure one diſeaſe with another, and a leſſer with a far greater. If he can ſo cure your fears and doubtings as to bring you into carnal ſecurity and preſumption, he will loſe nothing by the cure, and you will get nothing. If he can turn a poor doubting troubled Chriſtian, to be a ſecure Antinomian, he hath cured the ſmart of a cut finger by caſting them into a Lethargy:

thargy; or ſtupefaction by his opium, To go to Antinomian receipts to cure a troubled ſoul, is as going to a Witch to cure the body. 3. I would have you ſenſible of Gods goodneſs to you in theſe very troubles that you have ſo long lain under. Your bleſſed Phyſician knew your diſeaſe, and the temperature of your ſoul. 'Perhaps he ſaw that 'you were in ſome danger of being carried away with 'the Honours, Profits or Pleaſures of this world; 'and would have been entangled in either cove-'touſneſs, pride, voluptuouſneſs, or ſome ſuch de-'ſperate ſin: And now by theſe conſtant and extra-'ordinary apprehenſions of your danger, theſe ſins 'have been much kept under, temptations weak-'ned, and your danger prevented. If you have found no ſuch inclinations in your ſelf, yet God might find them. Had it not been far worſe for you to have lain ſo many years in pride, ſenſuality and forgetfulneſs of God, and utter neglect of the ſtate of your ſoul, than to have lain ſo long as you have done in apprehenſions of your danger? O love and admire your wiſe Phyſician! Little do you know now what he hath been doing for you: Nor ſhall you ever fully know it in this life; but hereafter you ſhall know it, when your ſanctification, and conſolation, and his praiſes ſhall be perfected together. 4. If you ſhould for the time to come expect or deſire that God ſhould ſet you out of all apprehenſion of danger, you know not what is that you deſire: It were to deſire your own undoing. Only ſee that you apprehend not your danger to be greater than it is; nor ſo apprehend it as to increaſe it, by driving you from Chriſt, but as to prevent it by driving you to him. Entertain not fancies and dreams of danger inſtead of right apprehenſions. Apprehend

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your happineſs and grounds of hope and comfort, and ſafety in Chriſt, and let theſe quite exceed your apprehenſions of the danger. Look not on it as a remedileſs danger, or as greater than the remedy. Do not conclude that you ſhall periſh in it, and it will ſwallow you up: But only let it make you hold faſt on Chriſt, and keep cloſe to him in obedience. Shall I lay open all the matter expreſſed in this ſection, by a familiar compariſon?

A King having many Subjects and Sons, which are all beyond Sea, or beyond ſome River, they muſt needs be brought over to him before they can live or reign with him. The River is frozen over at the ſides till it come almoſt to the middle. The fooliſh children are all playing on the Ice, where a deceiving enemy enticeth them to play on till they come to the deep, where they drop in one by one and periſh. The eldeſt Son, who is with the Father on the other ſide, undertaketh to caſt himſelf into the water, and ſwim to the further ſide, and break the Ice, and ſwim back with them all that will come with him and hold him. The Father bids him, Bring all my Subjects with you, if they will come and hold by you; but be ſure you fail not to bring my Sons. This is reſolved on; The Prince caſteth himſelf in the water, and ſwimmeth to the further ſide: He maketh a way through the Ice, and offereth all of them his ſafe carriage, if they will Accept him to be their bearer and helper, and will truſt themſelves on him, and hold faſt by him till they come to the further ſide. Some refuſe his help, and think he would deceive them, and lead them into the deep, and there leave them to periſh: Some had rather play on the Ice, and will not hearken to him: Some dare not venture through the ſtreams, or

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will not endure the coldneſs of the water; Some waveringly agree to him, and hold faintly by his Skirt, and when they feel the cold water, or are near the deep, or are weary of holding, they loſe him; either turning back, or periſhing ſuddenly in the gulf. The children are of the ſame mind with the reſt, but he is reſolved to loſe none of them, and therefore he chargeth them to come with him, and tells them fully what a welcome they ſhall have with their Father; and ceaſeth not his importunity till he perſwade them to conſent; Some of them ſay, How ſhall we ever get over the River? we ſhall be drowned by the way; He tells them, I will carry you ſafe over; ſo you will but hold faſt by me: Never fear; I warrant you: They all lay hold on him, and venture in with him. When they are in the midſt ſome are afraid, and cry out, We ſhall be drowned; Theſe he encourageth, and bids them truſt him; hold faſt; and fear not. Others when they hear theſe words that they need not fear, they grow ſo bold and utterly ſecure as to loſe their hold: To theſe he ſpeaketh in other language, and chargeth them to hold faſt by him; for if they loſe their hold, they will fall into the bottom, and if they ſtick not to him they will be drowned. Some of them upon this warning hold faſt; others are ſo boldly confident of his skill, and good-will, and promiſe, that they forget or value not his warning and threatning, but loſe their hold: Some through lazineſs and wearineſs do the like. Whereupon he lets them ſink till they are almoſt drowned, and cry out for help, *Save us or we periſh*, and think they are all loſt; and then he layeth hold of them and fetcheth them up again, and chideth them for their bold folly, and biddeth them look better to themſelves, and hold

hold faſter by him hereafter if they love themſelves. Some at laſt through meer wearineſs and weakneſs, before they can reach the bank, cry out, *O I am tired, I faint, I ſhall never hold faſt till I reach the ſhore, I ſhall be drowned.* Theſe he comforteth, and gives them cordials, and holdeth them by the hand, and bids them, Deſpair not: do your beſt: Hold faſt, and I will help you. And ſo he brings them all ſafe to the Haven.

This King is God: Heaven is his habitation: The Subjects are all men: The Sons who are part of the Subjects are the Elect: The reſt are the *Non-Elect*: The River or Sea is the paſſage of this life. The farther ſide, is all mens natural, ſinful diſtance and ſeparation from God and happineſs: The Ice that beats them, is this frail life of Pleaſures, Profits and Honours which delight the fleſh: The depth unfrozen is Hell. He that riceth them thither is the Devil. The eldeſt Son that is ſent to bring them over, is Jeſus Chriſt. His Commiſſion and undertaking is, to help all over that refuſe not his Help; and to ſee that the Elect be infallibly recovered and Saved. Do I need to go over the other particulars? I know you ſee my meaning in them all: Specially that which I aim at is this: that as *Paul* had a promiſe of the life of all that were with him in the ſhip, and yet when ſome would have gone out, he told them, *Except theſe abide in the ſhip ye cannot be ſaved*, Acts 27. 31. (ſo that he makes their apprehenſion of danger in a Poſſibility of being drowned, to be the means of detaining them in the ſhip till they came all ſafe to Land) ſo Jeſus Chriſt, who will infallibly ſave all his Elect (they being given him by his Father to be infallibly ſaved) will do it by cauſing them to hold faſt by him, through all the troubles, and labours,

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and temptations of this tumultuous, tempeſtuous world, and that till they came to Land; and the apprehenſion of their dangers ſhall be his means to make them hold faſt; Yet is not their ſafety principally in themſelves, but in him: Nor is it their holding faſt by him that is the chief cauſe of their difference from thoſe that periſh, but that is his love and reſolution to ſave them. And therefore when they do let go their hold, he will not ſo loſe them; but will fetch them up again; Only he will not bring them through this Sea of danger, as you would draw a block through the water; but as men that muſt hold faſt, and be commanded and threatned to that end; and therefore when they loſe their hold, it is the fear of drowning, which they felt themſelves near, which ſhall cauſe them to hold faſter the next time: and this muſt needs be the fear of a poſſible danger. And for thoſe that periſh, they have none to blame but themſelves. They periſh not for want of a Saviour, but becauſe they would not lay hold on him, and follow him through the tempeſts and waves of trial. Nor can they quarrel at him becauſe he did more for others, and did not as much for them, as long as he offered them ſo ſufficient help, that only their own wilful refuſal was their ruine, and their perdition was of themſelves.

I conclude therefore, That ſeeing our Salvation is laid by God, upon our faithful obedient holding faſt to Chriſt through all trials and difficulties, and our holy fear is the means of that holding faſt (Chriſt being ſtill the principal cauſe of our ſafety) therefore never look for ſuch a Certainty of Salvation, as ſhall put you above ſuch fears and moderated apprehenſions of danger: For then it is ten to one you will loſe your hold. You read in Scripture very

very many warnings to take heed left we fall, and threatnings to thoſe that do fall away and draw back. What are all theſe for, but to excite in us thoſe moderate fears, and cares, and holy diligence, which may prevent our falling away. And remember this, that there can be no ſuch holy fears, and cares, and diligence, where there is no danger or poſſibility of falling away; for there can be no Act without its proper Object: And the Object of fear is a poſſible hurt, at leaſt in the apprehenſion of him that feareth it. No man can fear the evil which he knoweth to be Impoſſible.

Direction XXI.

21. The next advice which I muſt give you is this, *Be thankful if you can but reach to a ſettled Peace, and compoſure of your mind, and lay not too much on the high raptures and feelings of comfort which ſome do poſſeſs: And if ever you enjoy ſuch feeling Joyes, expect not that they ſhould be either long or often.*

IT is the cauſe of miſerable languiſhing to many a poor ſoul, to have ſuch importunate expectations of ſuch paſſionate Joyes, that they think without theſe they have no true comfort at all; no witneſs of the Spirit, no Spirit of Adoption, no joy in the holy Ghoſt. Some think that others have much of this, though they have not, and therefore they torment themſelves becauſe it is not with them as with others;

others; when alas, they little know how it goes with others! Some taſte of ſuch raptures ſometimes themſelves have had; and therefore when they are gone, they think they are forſaken, and that all grace, or peace at leaſt is gone with them. Take heed of theſe expectations. And to ſatisfie you, let me tell you theſe two or three things: 1. A ſettled calm and peace of ſoul is a great Mercy, and not to be undervalued and looked at as Nothing. 2. The higheſt raptures and paſſionate feeling joyes, are uſually of moſt doubtful ſincerity. Not that I would have any ſuſpect the ſincerity of them without cauſe: but ſuch paſſions are not ſo certain ſigns of Grace, as the ſettled frame of the underſtanding and will; nor can we ſo eaſily know that they are of the Spirit, and they are liable to more queſtioning, and have in them a greater Poſſibility of deceit. Doubtleſs it is very much that Phantaſie and Melancholy, and ſpecially a natural weakneſs and movable temper will do in ſuch caſes. Mark whether it be not moſtly theſe three ſorts of people that have or pretend to have ſuch extraordinary raptures and feelings of joy. 1. Women and others that are moſt paſſionate. 2. Melancholy People. 3. Men that by erroneous opinions have loſt almoſt all their underſtandings in their Phantaſies, and live like men in a continual dream. Yet I doubt not but ſolid men have oft high joyes; and more we might all have, if we did our duty: And I would have no Chriſtian content himſelf with a dull quietneſs of ſpirit, but by all means poſſible to be much in labouring to rejoyce in God, and raiſing their ſouls to heavenly delights: O what lives do we loſe, which we might enjoy! But my meaning is this: Look at theſe joyes and delights as Duties and as mercies, but look not at them as Marks of trial; ſo as to place

more neceſſity in them than God hath done, or to think them to be ordinary things. If you do but feel ſuch an high eſtimation of Chriſt and Heaven, that you would not leave him for all the world, take this for your ſureſt Sign. And if you have but ſo much Probability or Hope of your intereſt in him, that you can think of God as one that loveth you, and can be thankful to Chriſt for Redeeming you, and are gladder in theſe hopes of your intereſt in Chriſt, and Glory, than if you were owner of all the world; take this for a happy Mercy, and a high Conſolation. Yet I mean not that your joy in Chriſt will be alwaies ſo ſenſible, as for worldly things; but it will be more rational, ſolid, and deeper at the Heart. And that you may know by this; You would not for all the Pleaſures, Honours or Profits in the world be in the ſame caſe as once you were (ſuppoſing that you were converted ſince you had the uſe of Reaſon and Memory) or at leaſt as you ſee the ungodly world ſtill lie in.

3. And let me add this: Commonly thoſe that have the higheſt paſſionate joyes, have the ſaddeſt lives: for they have with all the moſt paſſionate fears and ſorrows. Mark it, whether you find not this prove true. And it is partly from Gods Will in his diſpenſations: partly from their own neceſſities, who after their exaltations do uſually need a prick in the fleſh, and a meſſenger of Satan to buffet them, leſt they be exalted above meaſure: and partly and moſt commonly it is from the temperature of their bodies. Weak paſſionate women of moveable ſpirits and ſtrong affections, when they Love, they Love violently, and when they Rejoyce, eſpecially in ſuch caſes, they have moſt ſenſible Joyes, and when any fears ariſe, they have moſt terrible ſorrows. I know

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it is not ſo with all of that ſex: but mark the ſame people uſually that have the higheſt Joyes, and ſee whether at other times they have not the greateſt troubles. This week they are as at the gates of Heaven, and the next as at the doors of Hell. I am ſure with many it is ſo. Yet it need not be ſo if Chriſtians would but look at theſe high joyes as Duties to be endeavoured, and Mercies to be valued: But when they will needs Judge of their ſtate by them, and think that God is gone from them, or forſaken them, when they have not ſuch joyes, then it leaves them in terrour and amazement. Like men after a flaſh of lightning that are left more ſenſible of the darkneſs. For no wiſe man can expect that ſuch Joyes ſhould be a Chriſtians ordinary ſtate; or God ſhould ſo diet us with a continual feaſt. It would neither ſuit with our health, nor the condition of this Pilgrimage. Live therefore on your Peace of Conſcience as your ordinary diet, when this is wanting, know that God appointeth you a faſt for your health: and when you have a feaſt of high Joyes, feed on it and be thankful: but when they are taken from you, gape not after them as the Diſciples did after Chriſt at his Aſcenſion; but return thankfully to your ordinary diet of Peace: and remember that theſe Joyes which are now taken from you, may ſo return again: however there is a place preparing for you, where your Joyes ſhall be full.

DIRECTION XXII.

22. My next Direction is this, *Spend more of your time and care about your Duty than about your Comforts: and for the exerciſe and increaſe of your Graces, than for the diſcovery of them: And when you have done all that you can for Aſſurance and Comfort, you ſhall find that it will very much depend on your Actual Obedience.*

THis Direction is of as great importance as any that I have yet given you: but I ſhall ſay but little of it, becauſe I have ſpoke of it ſo fully already in my Book of *Reſt*, Part 3. Chap. 8, 9, 10, 11. My Reaſons for what I here aſſert are theſe: 1. Duty goeth in order of nature and time before comfort: as the Precept is before the Promiſe: Comfort is part of the Reward, and therefore neceſſarily ſuppoſeth Duty. 2. Grace makes men both ſo ingenuous and Divine, as to conſider Gods due as well as their own; and what they ſhould Do, as well as what they ſhall Have: ſtill remembring that our works cannot Merit at Gods hands. 3. As we muſt have Grace before we can Know we have it, ſo ordinarily we muſt have a good meaſure of Grace before we can ſo clearly diſcern it as to be certain of it. Small things, I have told you, are next to none, and hardly diſcernable by weak eyes. When all waies in the world are tried, it will be found that there is no way ſo ſure for a doubting ſoul to be made certain

tain of the truth of his Graces, as to keep them in Action, and get them increaſed. And it will be found that there is no one cauſe of Chriſtians doubting of the truth of their Faith, Love, Hope, Repentance, Humility, &c. ſo great or ſo common as the ſmall degree of theſe Graces. Doth not the very language of complaining Chriſtians ſhew this? One ſaith, I have no faith: I cannot believe: I have no love to God: I have no delight in duty: Another ſaith, I cannot mourn for ſin: my heart was never broken: I cannot patiently bear an injury: I have no courage in oppoſing ſin, &c. If all theſe were not in a low and weak degree, men could not ſo ordinarily think they had none. A lively, ſtrong, working Faith, Love, Zeal, Courage, &c. would ſhew themſelves, as do the higheſt Towers, the greateſt Mountains, the ſtrongeſt winds, the greateſt flames, which will force an obſervance by their greatneſs and effects. 4. Conſider alſo that it is more pleaſing to God to ſee his people ſtudy him and his will directly, than to ſpend the firſt and chiefeſt of their ſtudies about the attaining of comforts to themſelves. 5. And it is the nature of Grace to tend firſt and chiefly toward God; and but ſecondarily to be the evidence of our own happineſs. We have faith given us principally that we might believe, and live by it in daily applications of Chriſt: We have repentance, that it might break us off from ſin, and bring us back to God; We have Love, that we might Love God and our Redeemer, his Saints, and Laws, and waies; We have Zeal, that we might be quickned in all our holy duties: and we have obedience to keep us in the way of our duty: The firſt thing we have to do with theſe Graces, is to uſe them for thoſe holy ends which their nature doth expreſs: And then the diſcern-

ing of them that we may have Assurance, followeth after this both in time and dignity. 6. And it is a matter of far greater concernment to our selves to seek after the obtaining of Christ and Grace, than after the certain knowledge that we have them. You may be saved though you never get Assurance here, but you cannot be saved without Christ and Grace. God hath not made Assurance the Condition of your salvation. It tends indeed exceedingly to your comfort, and a precious mercy it is; but your safety lieth not on it. It is better go sorrowful and doubting to Heaven, than comfortably to Hell. First therefore ask what is the Condition of salvation and the way to it, and then look that you do your best to perform it, and to go that way, and then try your performance in its season. 7. Besides, as it is a work of far greater moment, so also of quicker dispatch, to Believe and Love Christ truly, than to get Assurance that you do truly Believe and Love him. You may believe immediately (by the help of Gods Grace:) but getting Assurance of it, may be the work of a great part of your life. Let me therefore entreat this one thing of you, that when you feel the want of any Grace, you would not presently bend all your thoughts upon the enquiry, Whether it be true or no: but rather say to your self, *I see trying is a great and difficult, a long and tedious work: I may be this many years about it, and possibly be unresolved still. If I should conclude that I have no Grace, I may be mistaken; and so I may, if I think that I have it. I may enquire of friends and Ministers long, and yet be left in doubt; it is therefore my surest way to seek presently to obtain it, if I have it not, and to increase it if I have it: and I am certain*

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none of that labour will be loſt: to get more is the way to know I have it.

But perhaps you will ſay, How ſhould I get more Grace? that is a buſineſs of greater difficulty than ſo. I anſwer, Underſtand what I told you before, that as the beginning of Grace is in your Underſtanding; ſo the heart and life of it is in your Will: and the Affections and paſſionate part are but the fruits and branches. If therefore your Grace be weak, it is chiefly in an *unwillingneſs* to yield to Chriſt and his Word and Spirit. Now how ſhould an unwilling ſoul be made *willing?* Why thus, 1. Pray conſtantly as you are able, for a willing mind, and yielding inclinable heart to Chriſt. 2. Hear conſtantly thoſe Preachers that bend their doctrine to inform your underſtanding of the great neceſſity and excellency of Chriſt, and Grace, and Glory; and to perſwade the Will with the moſt forcible Arguments. A perſwading quickning Miniſtry, that helps to excite your Graces, and draw up your heart to Chriſt, is more uſeful than they that ſpend moſt of their time to perſwade you of your ſincerity, and give you comfort. 3. But ſpecially lay out your thoughts more in the moſt ſerious Conſiderations of thoſe things which tend to breed and feed thoſe particular Graces which you would have increaſed. Objects and moving Reaſons kept much upon the mind by ſerious thoughts, are the great engine appointed both by Nature and by Grace to turn about the ſoul of man. Thoughts are to your ſoul, as taking in the Air, and Meat and Drink to your body. Objects conſidered do turn the ſoul into their own Nature. Such as are the things that you moſt think and conſider of (I mean in purſuance of them) ſuch will you be your ſelf. Conſideration,

frequent ſerious Conſideration, is Gods great inſtrument to convert the ſoul, and to confirm it: to get grace, and to keep it, and increaſe it: If any ſoul periſh for want of Grace, it's ten to one it is mainly for want of frequent and ſerious Conſideration. That the moſt of us do languiſh under ſuch weakneſſes, and attain to ſmall degrees of Grace, is for want of ſober frequent conſideration. We know not how great things this would do, if it were but faithfully managed. This then is mine advice, When you feel ſo great a want of faith and love (for thoſe be the main Graces for trial and uſe) that you doubt whether you have any or none, lay by thoſe doubting thoughts awhile, and preſently go and ſet your ſelf to conſider of Gods Truth, Goodneſs, Amiableneſs, and Kind heartedneſs to miſerable unworthy ſinners: think what he is in himſelf, and what he is to you, and what he hath done for you, and what he will do for you if you do but conſent. And then think of the vanity of all the childiſh Pleaſures of this world; how ſoon, and in how ſad a caſe they will leave us; and what ſilly contemptible things they are in compariſon of the everlaſting Glory of the Saints! By that time you have warmed your ſoul a little with ſuch ſerious thoughts, you will find your Faith and Love revive, and begin to ſtir and work within you; And then you will feel that you have Faith and Love! Only remember what I told you before, that the heart and ſoul of ſaving Faith and Love (ſuppoſing a Belief that the Goſpel is true) is all in this one Act of *Willingneſs* or *Conſent* to have Chriſt as he is offered. Therefore if you doubt of your Faith and Love, it is your own Willingneſs that you doubt of, or elſe you know not what you do. Now methinks,

if

if you took but a ſober view of the goodneſs of God, and the Glory of Heaven on one ſide, and of the ſilly, empty, worthleſs world on the other ſide; and then ask your heart, Which it will chuſe? and ſay to your ſelf, *O my ſoul, the God of Glory offers thee thy choice of dung and vanity for a little time, or of the inconceivable Joyes of Heaven for ever: Which wilt thou chuſe?* I ſay, methinks the anſwer of your own ſoul ſhould preſently reſolve you, that you do Believe, and that you Love God above this preſent world! For if you can chuſe him before the world, then you are more willing of him than the world: and if he have more of your will, for certain he hath more of your Faith and Love. Uſe therefore inſtead of doubting of your Faith, to Believe till you put it out of doubt; And if yet you doubt, ſtudy God, and Chriſt, and Glory yet better, and keep thoſe objects by Conſideration cloſe to your heart, whoſe nature is to work the heart to Faith and Love. For certainly objects have a mighty power on the ſoul; and certainly God, and Chriſt, and Grace, and Glory are Mighty Objects: as able to make a full and deep impreſſion on mans ſoul as any in the world; and if they work not, it is not through any imperfection in them, but becauſe they be not well applied, and by conſideration held upon the heart that they may work. Perhaps you will ſay, that Meditation is too hard a work for you; and that your memory is ſo weak that you want matter to meditate upon; or if you do meditate on theſe, yet you feel no great motion or alteration on your heart. To this I anſwer; If you want matter, take the help of ſome book that will afford you matter; and if you want life in Meditation, peruſe the moſt quickning writings you can get. If you have not better at hand,

read

read over (and seriously consider as you read it) those passages in the end of my Book of *Rest*, which direct you in the exercises of these graces, and give you some matter for your Meditation to work upon. And remember, that if you can increase the resolved choice of your will, you increase your Love, though you feel not those Affectionate workings that you desire.

Let me ask you now whether you have indeed taken this course in your doubtings? If not, how unwisely have you done? Doubting is no cure, but actual Believing and Loving is a cure. If Faith and Love were things that you would fain get, but cannot, then you had cause enough to fear, and to lie down and rise in trouble of mind from one year to another. But it's no such matter; It is so far from being beyond your reach or power to have these Graces, though you would, that they themselves are nothing else but your very Willingness; at least your Willingness to have Christ is both your Faith and Love. It may be said therefore to be in the power of your Will, which is nothing else but that Actual Willingness which you have already. If therefore you are unwilling to have him, what makes you complain for want of the sense of his presence, and the Assurance of his Love, and the Graces of his Spirit, as you frequently do? It's strange to me, that people should make so many complaints to God and men, and spend so many sad hours in fears and trouble, and all for want of that which they would not have: If you be not willing, be willing now: If you say you cannot; do as I have before directed you: One hours sober, serious thoughts of God and the world, of Christ and Satan, of Sin and Holiness, of Heaven and Hell, and the differences

ferences of them, will do very much to make you willing. Yet miſtake me not: Though I ſay you may have Chriſt if you Will, and Faith and Love if you Will, and no man can truly ſay, I would be glad to have Chriſt (as he is offered) but Cannot: Yet this Gladneſs, Conſent or Willingneſs which I mention, is the effect of the ſpecial work of the Spirit, and was not in your power before you had it: nor is it yet ſo in your power as to Believe without Gods further help: but he that hath made you willing, will not be wanting to maintain your willingneſs. Though I will ſay to any man, You may have Chriſt if you will: yet I will ſay to no man, You can be willing of your ſelf, or without the ſpecial Grace of God.

Nay, let me further ask: Have not you darkned, buried or weakned your Graces, inſtead of exerciſing and increaſing them, even then when you complained for want of Aſſurance of them? when you found a want of Faith and Love, have not you weakened them more, and ſo made them leſs diſcernable? Have you not feed your unbelief, and diſputed for your doubtings, and taken Satans part againſt your ſelf; and (which is far worſe) have you never through theſe doubtings entertained hard thoughts of God, and preſented him to your ſoul as unwilling to ſhew you mercy, and in an unlovely, dreadful, hideous ſhape, fitter to affright you from him, than to draw you to him, and likelier to provoke your hatred than your love? If you have not done thus, I know too many troubled ſouls that have: And if you have, you have taken a very unlikely way to get Aſſurance. If you would have been certain that you Loved God in ſincerity, you ſhould have laboured

laboured to Love him more, till you had been certain: And that you might do so, you should have kept better thoughts of God in your mind. You will hardly love him while you think of him as evil, or at least as hurtful to you. Never forget this Rule which I laid you down in the beginning, that, *He that will ever love God, must apprehend him to be Good: and the more large and deep are our apprehensions of his goodness, the more will be our Love. For such a God appears to be to mens fixed conceivings, such will their Affections be to him. For the fixed, deep conceptions, or apprehensions of the mind, do lead about the soul, and guide the life.*

I conclude therefore with this important and importunate request to you, That, *though it be a duty necessary in its time and place, to examine our selves concerning our sincerity, in our several graces and duties to God; yet be sure that the first and far greater part of your time, and pains, and care, and inquiries, be for the getting and increasing of your grace, than for the discerning it; and to perform your duty rightly, than to discern your right performance.* And when you confer with Ministers or others that may teach you, see that you ask ten times at least, *How should I get or increase my faith, my love to Christ, and to his people?* for once that you ask, *How shall I know that I believe or love?* Yet so contrary hath been, and still is the practice of most Christians among us in this point, that I have heard it twenty times asked, *How shall I know that I truly love the Brethren?* for once that I have heard it demanded: *How should I bring my heart to love them better?* And the like I may say of love to Christ himself.

I should next have spoke of the second part of the Direction,

Direction, *How much our Aſſurance and Comfort will ſtill depend on our Actual Obedience.* But this will fall in in handling the two or three next following Directions.

DIRECTION XXIII.

23. My next Advice is this, *Think not thoſe doubts and troubles of mind, which are cauſed and continued by wilful Diſobedience, will ever be well healed but by the healing of that Diſobedience: or that the ſame means muſt be uſed, and will ſuffice to the cure of ſuch troubles; which muſt be uſed, and will ſuffice to cure the troubles of a tender conſcience, and of an obedient Chriſtian, whoſe trouble is meerly through miſtakes of their condition.*

I Will begin with the latter part of this Direction. He that is troubled upon meer miſtakes, may be quieted upon the removal of them. If he underſtood not the univerſal extent of Chriſts ſatisfaction, or of the Covenant or conditional Grant of Chriſt and Life in him: and if upon this he be troubled, as thinking that he is not included; the convincing him of his errour may ſuffice to the removal of his trouble. If he be troubled through his miſtaking the nature of true Faith, or true Love, or other Graces, and ſo think that he hath them not when he hath them; the diſcovery of his errour may be the quieting of his ſoul. The ſoul that is troubled upon ſuch miſtakes,

miſtakes, muſt be tenderly dealt with: Much more they that are diſquieted by groundleſs fears, or too deep apprehenſions of the wrath or juſtice of God, of the evil of ſin, and of their *unworthineſs*, and for want of fuller apprehenſions of the loving kindneſs of God, and the tender compaſſionate nature of Chriſt. We can ſcarce handle ſuch ſouls too gently. God would have all to be tenderly dealt with, that are tender of diſpleaſing and diſhonouring him by ſin. Gods own language may teach all Miniſters what language we ſhould uſe to ſuch, *Iſa.* 57. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. *Thus ſaith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be alwaies wroth: For the ſpirit ſhould fail before me, and the ſouls which I have made, &c. But the wicked are like the troubled Sea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt: There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.* Much more tender language may ſuch expect from Chriſt in the Goſpel, where is contained a fuller revelation of his Grace. If *Mary* a poor ſinful woman lie weeping at his feet, and waſhing them with her tears, he hath not the heart to ſpurn her away; but openly proclaims the forgiveneſs of her many ſins. As ſoon as ever the heart of a ſinner is turned from his ſins, the heart of Chriſt is turned to him. The very ſumm of all the Goſpel is contained in thoſe precious words, which fully expreſs this, *Matth.* 11. 28, 29, 30. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt. Take my yoak upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye ſhall find Reſt unto*

you

your ſouls: For my yoak is eaſie, and my burden is light. When the Prodigal, *Luke* 15. 20. doth once come home to his Father, with ſorrow and ſhame confeſſing his unworthineſs, yea but reſolved to confeſs it; his Father preventeth him, and ſees him afar off, and ſtaies not his coming, but runs and meets him: and when he comes to him, he doth not upbraid him with his ſins, nor ſay, *Thou Rebel, why haſt thou forſaken me, and preferred harlots and luxury before me?* nay, he doth not ſo much as frown upon him: but compaſſionately falls on his neck and kiſſeth him: Alas, God knows that a poor ſinner in this humbled troubled caſe, hath burden enough on his back already, and indeed more than he is able of himſelf to bear. The ſenſe of his own ſinful folly and miſery is burden enough: If God ſhould add to this his frowns and terrors, and ſhould ſpurn at a poor ſinner that lies proſtrate at his feet, in tears or terrours, who then ſhould be able to ſtand before him, or to look him in the face? But he will not break the bruiſed Reed; he will not make heavier the burden of a ſinner. He calls them to come to him for Eaſe and Reſt, and not to oppreſs them, or kill them with terrours. We have not a King like *Rehoboam*, that will multiply our preſſures; but one whoſe office it is to break our yoaks, and looſe our bonds, and ſet us free. When he was a Preacher himſelf on earth, you may gather what Doctrine he preached by his Text, which he choſe at one of his firſt publick Sermons, which as you may find in *Luke* 4. 18, 19. was this, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the Goſpel to the poor; he hath ſent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of ſight to the blind, to ſet at liberty*

liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. O if a poor bruised, wounded soul had but heard this Sermon from his Saviours own mouth, what heart-meltings would it have caused? what pangs of Love would it have raised in him! You would sure have believed then that the Lord is gracious, when *All* (that heard him) *bare him witness, and wondred at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, Luke* 4. 22. I would desire no more for the comfort of such a soul, than to see such a sight, and feel such a feeling as the poor penitent Prodigal did, when he found himself in the arms of his Father, and felt the kisses of his mouth, and was surprized so unexpectedly with such a torrent of Love. The soul that hath once seen and felt this, would never sure have such hard and doubtful thoughts of God, except through ignorance they knew not whose arms they were that thus embraced them, or whose voice it was that thus bespoke them; or unless the remembrance of it were gone out of their minds. You see then what is Gods own language to humbled Penitents, and what is the method of his dealings with them; And such must be the language and dealing of his Ministers: They must not wound when Christ would heal; nor make sad the heart that Christ would comfort, and would not have made sad, *Ezek.* 13. 22.

But will this means serve turn, or must the same course be taken to remove the sorrows of the wilfully disobedient? No, God takes another course himself, and prescribes another course to his Ministers, and requires another course from the sinner himself. But still remember who it is that I speak of: It is not the ordinary unavoidable infirmities of the Saints that I speak of; such as they cannot be rid

rid of, though they fain would; ſuch as *Paul* ſpeaks of, *Rom.* 7. 19. *The good that I would do, I do not:* and *when I would do good, evil is preſent with me:* And *Gal.* 5. 17. *The fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, &c.* ſo that we cannot do the things that we would. A true Chriſtian would Love God more perfectly, and Delight in him more abundantly, and bring every thought in ſubjection to his Will, and ſubdue the very remnants of carnal concupiſcence, that there ſhould be no ſtirrings of luſt or unjuſt anger, or worldly deſires, or pride within him; and that no vain word might paſs his lips: all this he would do, but he cannot. Striving againſt theſe unavoidable infirmities, is conquering.

But though we cannot keep under every motion of concupiſcence, we can forbear the execution. Anger will ſtir upon provocations; but we may reſtrain it in degree, that it ſet us not in a flame, and do not much diſtemper or diſcompoſe our minds: and we can forbid our tongues all raging furious or abuſive words in our Anger; all curſing, ſwearing or reproachful ſpeaking. If an envious thought againſt our Brother do ariſe in our hearts, becauſe he is preferred before us, we may hate it and repreſs it, and chide our hearts for it, and command our tongues to ſpeak well of him, and no evil. Some pride and ſelf-eſteem will remain and be ſtirring in us, do what we can, it is a ſin ſo deeply rooted in our corrupt Natures: But yet we can deteſt it, and reſiſt it, and meet with abhorrence of our ſelf-conceited thoughts, and rejoycings in our own reputations and fame, and inward heart-riſings againſt thoſe that undervalue us, and ſtand in the way of our Repute; and we may forbear our boaſting language, and our conteſtings for our credit, and our excuſes of our ſins, and our back-

bitings and secret defaming of those that cross us in the way of Credit: We may forbear our quarrels, and estrangements, and dividings from our Brethren, and stiff insisting on our own conceits, and expecting that others should make our Judgements their Rule, and say and do as we would have them, and all dance after our pipe: all which are the effects of inward Pride. We cannot, while we are on earth, be free from all inordinate Love of the world, and the Riches and Honours of it; but we may so watch against it and repress it, as that it shall neither be preferred before God, nor draw us to unlawful ways of gain, by lying deceit and over-reaching our Brethren; by stealing, unjust or unmerciful dealings, oppressing the poor, and insulting over those that are in the way of our thriving, and crushing them that would hinder our aspiring designs, and treading them down that will not bow to us, and taking revenge of them that have crossed or disparaged us, or cruelly exacting all our Rights and Debts of the poor; and squeezing the purses of Subjects or Tenants, or those that we bargain with, like a spunge, as long as any thing will come out: Yea we may so far subdue our love of the world, as that it shall not hinder us from being merciful to the poor, compassionate to our servants and labourers, and bountiful to our power in doing good works: nor yet shut out Gods service from our families or closets, nor rob him of our frequent, affectionate thoughts, especially on the Lords day. So for sensuality, or the pleasing of our flesh more immediately; we shall never on earth be wholly freed from inordinate motions, and temptations, and fleshly desires, and urgent inclinations and solicitations to forbidden things. But yet we may restrain our Appetite by reason,

reaſon, ſo far that it brings us not to gluttony and drunkenneſs, and a ſtudying for our bellies, and pampering of our fleſh, or a taking care for it, and making proviſion to ſatisfie its Luſts, *Rom.* 13. 14. We may forbear the obeying it, in exceſs of Apparel, in undecent, ſcandalous or time-waſting Recreations, in uncleanneſs, or unchaſt ſpeeches or behaviour, or the reading of amorous Books and Sonnets, or feeding our eyes or thoughts on filthy, or enticing objects, or otherwaies wilfully blowing the fire of luſt: So alſo for the performance of Duty. We ſhall never in this life be able to Hear or Read ſo diligently, and underſtandingly, or affectionately as we would do: nor to remember or profit by what we hear, as we deſire. But yet we can bring our ſelves to the Congregation, and not preferr our eaſe, or buſineſs, or any vain thing before Gods Word and Worſhip, or loath, or deſpiſe it, becauſe of ſome weakneſs in the ſpeaker: and we may in a great meaſure reſtrain our thoughts from wandring, and force our ſelves to attend; and labour when we come home to recall it to mind. We cannot call on God ſo fervently, believingly or delightfully as we would: But yet we may do it ſincerely as we can, and do it conſtantly. We cannot inſtruct our children and ſervants, and reprove or exhort our neighbours, with that boldneſs, or love and compaſſion and diſcretion, and meet expreſſions, as we would: But yet we may do it faithfully and frequently as we are able.

So that you may ſee in all this what ſin it is that *Paul* ſpeaks of, *Rom* 7. when he ſaith, When he would do good, evil is preſent with him; and that he is led captive to the Law of ſin, and ſerves the Law of ſin with his fleſh: and *Gal.* 4. 17. when he ſaith, *We cannot do the things that we would*; he ſpeaks not of

wilful sinning, or gross sin, but of unavoidable infirmities; whereby also we are too often drawn into a committing of many sins which we might avoid (for so the best do.)

And because you may often read and hear of sins of Infirmity, as distinguished from other sins, let me here give you notice, that this word may be taken in several senses, and that there are three several sorts of sins of Infirmity in the Godly.

1. There are those sins which a man cannot avoid though he would: which are in the gentlest sense called *Sins of Infirmity*. Here note, 1. That *Adam* had none such. 2. And that the reason of them is because, 1. Our reason which should direct, and our Wills themselves which should command, are both imperfect. 2. And our Faculties that should be commanded and directed, are by sin grown impotent and obstinate, and have contracted a rebelling disobedient dispostion. 3. And that degree of Grace, which the best attain to in this life, is not such as wholly to overcome either the imperfection of the guiding and commanding faculty, or the rebellion of the obeying faculties. Otherwise if our own Wills were perfect, and the rebellion of the inferiour faculties cured: no man could then say, *The good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do.* For the Will would so fully command, that all would obey, and it self being perfect, all would be perfect. And therefore in Heaven it is and will be so.

I know Philosophers conclude that all acts of the inferiour Faculties are but acts commanded by the Will: It should be so I confess: It is the office of the Will to command, and the understanding to direct, and the rest to obey. But in our state of sinful imperfection the soul is so distempered and corrupted, that

that the Will cannot fully rule thoſe Faculties that it ſhould rule; ſo that it may be ſaid, *I would forbear ſin, but cannot.* For 1. The underſtanding is become a dark, imperfect Director. 2. The Will is become an imperfect Receiver of the Underſtandings Directions; yea an oppoſer, as being tainted with the neighbourhood of a diſtempered ſenſe. 3. When the Will is rectified by Grace, it is but in part: and therefore when *Paul* or any holy man ſaith, *I would do good*, and *I would not do evil*, they mean it not of a perfect willingneſs, but of a ſincere; to wit, that this is the main bent of their will, and the reſolved prevalent act of it, is for good. 4. When the *Will* doth command, yet the commanded Faculties do refuſe to obey, through an unfitneſs of impotency and corruption. 1. The Will hath but an imperfect command of the Underſtanding (I mean as to the exerciſe of the act, in which reſpect it commandeth it, and not as to the ſpecification of the Act.) A man may truly and ſtrongly deſire to Know more, and apprehend things more clearly, and yet cannot. 2. The Will hath but an imperfect command of the Phantaſie or Thoughts; ſo that a man may truly ſay, *I would think more frequently, more intentively, and more orderly of good, and leſs of vanity; and yet I cannot.* For objects and paſſions may force the Phantaſie and Cogitations in ſome degree. 3. The Will hath but an imperfect command of the paſſions: ſo that a man may truly ſay, *I would not be troubled, or afraid, or grieved, or diſquieted, or angry; but I cannot chuſe and I would mourn more for ſin, and be more afraid of ſinning, and of Gods diſpleaſure, and more zealous for God, and more delighted in him, and joy more in holy things, but I cannot.* For theſe paſſions lie ſo open to the aſſault of objects (having the ſenſes for their in-let, and the

moveable ſpirits for their ſeat or inſtruments) that even when the Will commands them one way, an object may force them in part againſt the Wills command, as we find ſenſibly in caſes of fear, and ſorrow or anger, which we can force a man to whether he will or no. And if there be no contradicting object, yet cannot the Will excite theſe paſſions to what height it ſhall command. For their motion depends as much (and more) on the lively manner of repreſenting the Object, and the working nature and weight of the Object repreſented, and upon the heat and mobility of the ſpirits, and temperature of the body, as upon the command of the Will. 4. Much leſs can the Will command out all vicious habits and ſenſual or corrupt inclinations: and therefore a true Chriſtian may well ſay in reſpect of theſe, that he would be more holy, heavenly and diſpoſed to good, and leſs to evil but he cannot. 5. As for complacency and diſplacency, liking or diſliking, love and hatred, ſo far as they are paſſions, I have ſpoke of them before: but ſo far as they are the immediate acts of the Will (Willing and Nilling) they are not properly ſaid to be commanded by it, but elicit, or acted by it: (wherein, how far it hath power is a moſt noble Queſtion; but unfit for this place or your capacity.) And thus you ſee that there are many Acts of the Soul, beſide Habits, which the Will cannot now perfectly command, and ſo a Chriſtian cannot be what he would be, nor do the things that he would: And theſe are the firſt ſort of ſins of Infirmity.

If you ſay, *Sure theſe can be no ſins, becauſe we are not willing of them, and there is no more ſin than there is Will in it.* I anſwer, 1. We were in *Adam* willing of that ſin which cauſed them.

2. We

2. We are in ſome degree inclining in our Wills to ſin, though God have that prevalent part and determination, which in comparative caſes doth denominate them. 3. The Underſtanding and Will may be moſt hainouſly guilty where they do not conſent, in that they do not more ſtrongly diſſent, and more potently and rulingly command all the ſubject faculties. And ſo a Negation of the Wills act, or of ſuch a Degree of it, as is neceſſary to the Regiment of the ſenſual part, is a deep guilt and great offence, and it may be ſaid, that there is Will in this ſin. It is morally or reputatively voluntary, though not naturally: becauſe the Will doth not its office when it ſhould: As a man is guilty of voluntary murder of his own child, that ſtands by and ſeeth his ſervant kill him, and doth not do his beſt to hinder him. I would this were better underſtood by ſome Divines: For I think that the commoneſt guilt of the Reaſon and Will in our actual ſins, is by Omiſſion of the exerciſe of their Authority to hinder it: And that moſt ſins are more brutiſh, as to the true efficient cauſe, than many imagine; and yet they are humane or moral Acts too, and the ſoul nevertheleſs guilty; becauſe the commanding Faculties performed not their office, and ſo are the Moral or imputative cauſes, and ſo the great culpable cauſes of the fact. But I am drawn nearer to Philoſophy and points beyond your reach than I intended: a fault that I muſt be ſtill reſiſting in all my Writings, being upon every occurring difficulty carryed to forget my ſubject, and the capacity of the meaneſt to whom I write: But what you underſtand not, paſs over, and go to the next.

The ſecond kind of ſins of Infirmity are, *The ſmaller ſort of ſins, which we may forbear if we will*; that is,

If we be actually, though not perfectly, yet prevalently Willing: or if our Wills be determined to forbear them; or if the chief part of the Will actually be for such forbearance. The first sort are called sins of Infirmity in an Absolute sense. These last I call sins of Infirmity in both an Absolute and Comparative sense: that is, both as they proceed from our inward corruption, which through the weakness of the soul having but little grace, is not fully restrained, and also as it is compared with gross sins: And so we may call idle words, and rash expressions in our haste, and such like, *Sins of Infirmity*, in comparison of Murder, Perjury, or the like gross sins, which we commonly call *Crimes* or *Wickedness*, when the former we use to call but *Faults*. These Infirmities are they which the Papists (and some Learned Divines of our own; as *Rob. Bzronius* in his excellent Tractate *de Peccat. Mortali & Veniali*) do call *Venial sins*; Some of them in a fair and honest sense, *viz. Because they are such sins as a true Christian may live and die in, though not unrepented or unresisted, yet not subdued so far as to forsake or cease from the practice of them; and yet they are pardoned.* But other Papists call them *Venial* sins in a wicked sense, as if they needed no pardon, or deserved not eternal punishment. (And why should they call them *Venial* if they need not pardon?) A justified man liveth in the daily practice of some vain thoughts, or the frequent commission of some other sins, which by his utmost diligence he might restrain: But he liveth not in the frequent practice of Adultery, Drunkenness, False-witnessing, Slandering, Hating his Brother, &c.

Yet observe, that though the forementioned lesser sins are called *Infirmities*, in regard of the matter of them; yet they may be so committed in regard of the

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end and manner of them, as may make them crimes or groſs ſins: As for example, If one ſhould uſe idle words wilfully, reſolvedly, without reſtraint, reluctancy or tenderneſs of conſcience, this were groſs ſinning; or the nearer it comes to this, and the more wilfulneſs, or neglect, or evil ends there is in the ſmalleſt forbidden action, the worſe it is, and the groſſer. And obſerve (of which more anon) that the true bounds or difference between groſs ſins, and thoſe leſſer faults, which we call Infirmities, cannot be given; (I think, by any man; I am ſure not by me) either as the **Act** it ſelf, to ſay, juſt what **Acts** are groſs ſins, and what not; or elſe, as to the manner of committing them; as to ſay, Juſt how much of the Will muſt go to make a groſs ſin; or Juſt how far a man may proceed in the degree of evil intents; or how far in the frequency of ſinning, before it muſt be called a groſs ſin.

3. The third ſort of ſins, which may be called *Sins of Infirmity*, are theſe laſt mentioned groſs ſins themſelves, ſo far as they are found in the Regenerate: Theſe are groſs ſins put in oppoſition to the former ſort of Infirmities; but our Divines uſe to to call them all *Sins of Infirmity*, in oppoſition to the ſins of Unbelievers, who are utterly unholy. And they call them *Sins of Infirmity*, 1. Becauſe the perſon that committeth them is not dead in ſins, as the Unregenerate are, but only diſeaſed, wounded and infirm. 2. Becauſe that they are not committed with ſo full conſent of Will, as thoſe of the Unregenerate are; but only after much ſtriving, or at leaſt contrary to Habitual Reſolutions, though not againſt **Actual**.

Here we are in very great Difficulties, and full of Controverſies: Some ſay, that theſe groſs ſins do extinguiſh

extinguiſh true Grace, and are inconſiſtent with it: and that *David* and *Peter* were out of the ſtate of Grace till they did again Repent: Others ſay, that they were in the ſtate of Grace, and not at all ſo liable to condemnation, but that if they had died in the Act, they had been ſaved: becauſe *There is no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus*: and that therefore all the ſins of Believers are alike ſins of Infirmity, pardoned on the ſame terms: and therefore as a raſh word may be pardoned without a particular repentance, ſo poſſibly may theſe groſs ſins. To others this ſeems dangerous and contrary to Scripture, and therefore they would fain find out a way between both: But how to do it clearly and ſatisfactorily is not eaſie (at leaſt to me, who have been long upon it, but am yet much in the dark in it.) I think it is plain that ſuch perſons are not totally unſanctified by their ſin; I believe that Chriſts intereſt is Habitually more in their Wills than is the intereſt of the fleſh or world, at that very time when they are ſinning, and ſo Chriſts intereſt is leaſt as to their Actual Willing; And ſo ſin prevaileth for that time againſt the Act of their Faith and Love, but not wholly againſt the prevalent part of the Habit. And therefore when the ſhaking wind of that ſtormy temptation is over, the ſoul will return to Chriſt by Repentance, Love, and renewed Obedience. But then to know what ſtate he is Relatively in this while, as to his Juſtification, and Reconciliation, and right to Glory, is the point of exceeding difficulty. Whether as we diſtinguiſh of Habitual Faith, and Love, and Obedience, which he hath not Loſt; and Actual, which he hath loſt; ſo we muſt make ſome anſwerable diſtinction of Juſtification (Habitual and Actual it cannot be) into Virtual Juſtification which he hath

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not loſt, and Actual Juſtification which he hath loſt? or into Plenary Juſtification (which he hath not) and Imperfect Juſtification, wanting a further Act to make it Plenary (which may remain.) But ſtill it will be more difficult to ſhew punctually what this Imperfect or Virtual Juſtification is: and moſt difficult to ſhew, Whether with the loſs of Actual Plenary Juſtification, and the loſs of a Plenary Right to Heaven, a mans ſalvation may conſiſt; that is, Whether if he ſhould dye in that condition, he ſhould be ſaved or condemned? Or if it be ſaid, that *he ſhall certainly repent*, 1. Yet ſuch a ſuppoſition may be put, while he yet r penteth not; for the inquiry into his ſtate; How far there is any interciſion of his Juſtification, Pardon, Adoption or Right to ſalvation? 2. And whether it can fully be proved that it is impoſſible (or that which never was or ſhall be) for a Regenerate man to dye in the very act of a groſs ſin (as ſelf-murder or the like?) For my part I think God hath purpoſely left us here in the dark, that we may not be too bold in ſinning, but may know that whether the groſs ſins of Believers be ſuch as deſtroy their Juſtification and the right to Glory, prevalently, or not, yet certainly they leave them in the dark, as to any Certainty of their Juſtification or Salvation.

And then more dark is it and impoſſible to diſcover, How far a man may go in theſe groſſer ſins, and yet have the prevalent habits of Grace? As to the former Queſtion about the interciſion of Juſtification, I am ſomewhat inclinable to think, That the habit of Faith hath more to do in our Juſtification than I have formerly thought, and may as properly be ſaid to be the Condition as the Act: and that as long as a man is (in a prevalent degree) habitually a Believer,

a Believer, he is not only imperfectly and virtually Justified, but so far actually Justified, that he should be saved, though he were cut off before he actually Repent: And that he being already habitually Penitent, having a hatred of all sin as sin, should be saved if meer want of opportunity do prevent the act: And that only those sins do bring a man into a state of condemnation, prove him in such, which consist not with the *Habitual Preheminence* of Christs interest in our souls, above the interest of the flesh and world; And that *David's* and *Peter's* were such as did consist with the preheminence of Christs interest in the habit. But withall, that such gross sins must needs be observable, and so the soul that is guilty doth ordinarily know its guilt, yea and think of it: And that it is inconsistent with this Habitual Repentance, not to Repent actually as soon as Time is afforded, and the violence of passion so far allaied, as that the soul may recollect it self, and Reason have its free use: And that he that hath this leisure and opportunity for the free use of Reason, and yet doth not Repent, it is a sign that the interest of the flesh is habitually as well as actually stronger than Christs interest in him. I say, in this doubtful case, I am most inclining to judge thus: But as I would have no man take this as my resolved Judgement, much less as certain Truth, and least of all, to venture on sin or impenitency ever the more for such a doubtful opinion, which doth not conclude him to be certainly unjustified: so I am utterly ignorant both how long sensual passions may possibly rage, and keep the soul from sober Consideration; or how far they may interpose in the very time of Consideration, and frustrate it, and prevail against it: and so keep the sinner from actual Repenting, or at least, from a full ingenuous acknowledgement

ledgement and bewailing of the ſin, which is neceſſary to full Repentance: and how long Repentance may be ſo far ſtifled, as to remain only in ſome inward grudgings of conſcience, and trouble of mind, hindered from breaking out into free Confeſſion (which ſeemeth to have been *David*'s caſe long.) Nay it is impoſſible to know juſt how long a man may live in the very practice of ſuch groſs ſin, before Chriſts habitual Intereſt above the fleſh be either overthrown, or proved not to be there; and how oft a man that hath true Grace may commit ſuch ſins: Theſe things are undiſcernable; beſides that none can punctually define a groſs ſin, ſo as to exclude every degree of Infirmities, and include every degree of ſuch groſs ſin.

Perhaps you will marvel why I run ſo far in this Point: It is both to give you as much light as I can, what ſins they be which be to be called Infirmities, and ſo what ſins they be that do forbid that gentle, comforting way of cure, when the ſoul is troubled for them, which muſt be uſed with thoſe that are troubled more than needs, or upon miſtakes; and alſo to convince you of this weighty Truth, That *Our Comfort, yea and Aſſurance hath a great dependance on our actual obedience: yea ſo great, that the leaſt obedient ſort of ſincere Chriſtians cannot by ordinary means have any Aſſurance: and the moſt obedient (if other neceſſaries concur) will have the moſt Aſſurance: and for the middle ſort, their Aſſurance will riſe and fall, ordinarily with their obedience; ſo that there's no way to comfort ſuch offending Chriſtians, but by reducing them to fuller obedience by Faith and Repentance, that ſo the evidences of their Juſtification may be clear, and the great impediments of their Aſſurance and Comfort be removed.*

That

This I will yet make clearer to you by its Reasons, and then tell you how to apply it to your ſelf.

1. No man can be ſure of his ſalvation or Juſtification, but he that is ſure of his true Faith and Love. And no man can be ſure of his true Faith and Love, but he that is ſure of the ſincerity of his obedience. For true Faith doth ever take God for our great Soveraign, and Chriſt for our Lord-Redeemer, and containeth a Covenant-delivery of a mans ſelf to God and the Redeemer, to be Ruled by him, as a Subject, Child, Servant and Spouſe. This is not done ſincerely and ſavingly, unleſs there be an actual and habitual Reſolution to obey God and the Redeemer, before all creatures, and againſt all temptations that would draw us from him. To obey Chriſt a little, and the fleſh more, is no true obedience: If the fleſh can do more with us to draw us to ſin, than Faith and Obedience do to keep us from ſin, ordinarily; this is no true Faith or Obedience. If Chriſt have not the Soveraignty in the ſoul, and his Intereſt be not the moſt predominant and potent, we are no true Believers. Now it is plain, that the Intereſt of the world and fleſh doth actually prevail, when a man is actually committing a known ſin, and omitting a known duty: and then it is certain that Habits are known but by the Acts. And therefore it muſt needs be that the ſoul that moſt ſinneth, muſt needs be moſt in doubt whether the intereſt of Chriſt or the fleſh be predominant? and ſo whether his obedience be true or no? and ſo whether he did ſincerely take Chriſt for his Soveraign? and that is, whether he be a true Believer? For when a man is enquiring into the ſtate of his ſoul, Whether he do ſubject himſelf to Chriſt as his only Soveraign? and whether

whether the Authority and Love of Christ will do more with him, than the temptations of the world, flesh and devil? he hath no way to be resolved but by feeling the Pulse of his own Will? And if he say, *I am willing to obey Christ before the flesh*, and yet do actually live in an obedience to the flesh before Christ, he is deceived in his own Will: for this is no saving Willingness. A wicked man may have some will to obey Christ principally; but having more will to the contrary, *viz.* to please the flesh before Christ, therefore he is wicked still: so that you see in our self-examination, the business is for the most part finally resolved into our sincere actual obedience. For thus we proceed: We first find, *He that believeth and loveth Christ sincerely, shall be saved.* Then we proceed, *He that believeth sincerely taketh Christ for his Soveraign.* Then, *He that truly taketh Christ for his Soveraign, doth truly resolve to obey him and his Laws, before the world, flesh or devil.* Then, *He that truly resolveth thus to obey Christ before all, doth sincerely perform his resolution, and doth so obey him.* For that is no true resolution ordinarily, that never comes to performance. And here we are cast unavoidably, to try whether we do perform our resolutions by actual obedience, before we can sit down with setled Peace: much more before we get Assurance. Now those that are diligent and careful in obeying, and have greatest conquest over their corruptions, and do most seldom yield to temptations, but do most notably and frequently conquer them, these have the clearest discovery of the performance of their resolutions by disobedience; and consequently the fullest Assurance: But they that are oftenest overcome by temptations, and yield most to sin, and live most disobediently, must needs be furthest from Assurance

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of the sincerity of their obedience, and consequently of their salvation.

2. God himself hath plainly made our actual obedience, not only a sign of true Faith, but a secondary part of the condition of our salvation, as promised in the New Covenant. And therefore it is as impossible to be saved without it, as without Faith: supposing that the person have opportunity to obey, in which case only it is made necessary, as a condition. This I will but cite several Scriptures to prove, and leave you to peruse them if you be unsatisfied, *Rom.* 8. 1. to 14. They that are in Christ Jesus, are they that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. *If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye by the Spirit do mortifie the deeds of the body ye shall live,* Rev. 22. 14. *Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in by the Gate into the City,* Heb. 5. 9. *He is become the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him,* Mat. 11. 28, 29, 30. *Take my yoak upon you, for it is easie, and my burden, for it is light. Learn of me to be meek and lowly, &c. and ye shall find Rest, &c. Joh* 16. 27. *Luke* 13. 24. *Phil.* 2. 12. *Rom.* 2. 7, 10. *Joh.* 15 12, 13. & 12. 21. *Mat.* 5. 44. *Luke* 6. 27, 35. *Prov.* 8. 17, 21. *Mat.* 10. 37. *1 Tim.* 6. 18, 19. *2 Tim.* 2. 5, 12. *Mat.* 25. 41, 42. *James* 2. 21, 22, 23, 24, 26. & 1. 22. & 2. 5. *Prov.* 1. 23. & 28. 13. *Luke* 13. 3, 5. *Mat.* 12. 37. & 11. 25, 26. & 6. 12, 14, 15. *1 Joh.* 1. 9. *Acts* 8. 22. & 3. 19. & 22. 16. *Luke* 6. 37. *1 Pet.* 4. 18. & 1. 2, 22. *Rom.* 6. 16. with abundance more the like. Now when a poor sinner that hath oft fallen into Drunkenness, Railing, Strife, Envying, &c. shall read that these are the works of the flesh, and that for these things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; and that every man shall be

be judged according to his works, and according to what he hath done in the flesh; and that they that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God; it cannot be but that his Assurance of salvation must needs have so great a dependance on his obedience, as that these sins will diminish it. When he reads *Rom. 6. 16. His servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto Righteousness*; he must needs think, how such a time and such a time he obeyed sin: and the oftner and the more wilfully he did it, the doubtfuller will his case be. Especially if he be yet in a sinful course, which he might avoid, whether of gross sin, or any willful sin, it cannot be but this will obscure the evidence of his obedience. Men cannot judge beyond evidence: and he that hath not the evidence of his true obedience, hath not the evidence of the sincerity of his Faith.

3. Moreover, Assurance and Comfort are Gods gifts, and without his gracious aid we cannot attain them. But God will not give such gifts to his children while they stand out in disobedience, but when they carefully please him. Paternal Justice requires this.

4. And it would do them abundance of hurt, and God much dishonour, if he should either tell them just how oft, or how far they may sin, and yet be saved; or yet should keep up their Peace and Comforts as well in their greatest disobedience, as in their tendrest careful walking with him. But these things I spoke of before and formerly elsewhere.

You see then, that though some obedient tender Christians may yet on several occasions be deprived of Assurance; yet ordinarily no other but they have Assurance: And that Assurance and Comfort will rise and fall with obedience.

And for all the Antinomian objections againſt this, as if it were a leading men to their own righteouſneſs from Chriſt, I refer you to the twenty Arguments which I before laid you down to prove that we may and muſt fetch our Aſſurance and Comfort from our own works and Graces: and ſo from our own Evangelical Righteouſneſs, which is ſubordinate to Chriſts Righteouſneſs (which he ſpeaks of, *Mat.* 25. laſt; and in forty places more;) though we muſt have no thoughts of a Legal Righteouſneſs (according to the Law of Works or Ceremonies) in our ſelves. They may as well ſay, that a woman doth forſake her husband, becauſe ſhe comforteth her ſelf in this, that ſhe hath not forſaken him, or been falſe and unchaſt, thence gathering that he will not give her a bill of Divorce: Or that a ſervant forſakes his Maſter; or a ſubject his Prince; or a Parent is forſaken by his child; becauſe they comfort themſelves in their Obedience and Loyalty, gathering thence that they are not flat Rebels, and ſhall not be uſed as Rebels! Or that any that enter Covenant with Superiours do forſake them, becauſe they comfort themſelves in their keeping Covenant, as a ſign that the Covenant ſhall be kept with them: All theſe are as wiſe collections, as to gather that a man forſakes Chriſt and his Righteouſneſs, and ſetteth up his own inſtead of it, becauſe he looks at his not forſaking, refuſing and vilifying of Chriſt, his Love and faithful obedience to Chriſt, as comfortable ſigns that Chriſt will not forſake and reject him. Do theſe men think that a Rebel may have the Love of his Prince, and as much comfort from him as a Loyal Subject? or a whoriſh woman have as much love and comfort from her Husband, as a faithful Wife? or a ſtubborn rebellious Son or Servant have as much

love

love and comfort from their Father or Mother as the dutiful? If there be so near a Relation as hitherto we have supposed, between a soveraign and subjection to him, and a husband and Marriage-faithfulness to him, and a Master and service to him, and a Father and loving obedience to him; it is strange that men should suppose such a strange opposition, as these men do? Certainly God doth not so when he saith, *Mal.* 1. 6. *If I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear?* And *Isa.* 1. 3, 4. *Hear O Heavens, and give ear O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me; The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his Masters crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider: Ah sinful Nation! a people laden with iniquity! a seed of evil doers! children that are corrupters! they have forsaken the Lord! they have provoked the holy One of Israel to anger! they are gone away backward.* And *Jer.* 3. 19. *Thou shalt call me My Father, and shalt not depart away from me.* And 2 *Tim.* 2. 19. *The Lord knoweth who are his*; and *let him that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.* And *Psal.* 66. 18. *If I delight in iniquity or regard it, God will not hear my prayers*, saith *David* himself. Doubtless *Paul* did not forsake Christs Righteousness by confidence in his own, when he saith, *This is our rejoycing, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation among you*, 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. with many the like which I before mentioned. Nor doth the Lord Jesus at the day of Judgement turn men off from his Righteousness, when he saith, *Well done good and faithful servant because thou hast been faithful in a very little, I will make thee ruler over much*, Luk. 19. 17 Mat. 25. 23. and calls them thereupon Righteous, saying, *And*

the righteous shall go into life everlasting, Mat. 25. last.

It remains now that I further acquaint you what use you should make of this observation, concerning the dependance of Assurance upon actual obedience. And 1. I advise you, if your soul remain in doubts and troubles, and you cannot enjoy God in any way of peace and comfort, nor see any clear evidence of the sincerity of your faith; take a serious view of your obedience: and faithfully survey your heart and life, and your daily carriage to God in both. See whether there be nothing that provokes God to an unusual Jealousie. If there be, it is either the increase of some carnal interest in your heart, or else the wilful or negligent falling into some actual sin, of commission or of omission. In the making of this search you have need to be exceeding cautelous, for if I have any acquaintance with the mysterie of this business, your peace or trouble, comfort or discomfort will mainly depend on this. And your care must lie in this point; that you diligently avoid these two extreams: First, That you do not deal negligently and unfaithfully with your own soul, as either unwilling to know the truth, or unwilling to be at that labour which you must needs be at before you can know it. Secondly, that you do not either condemn your self when your conscience doth acquit you, or vex your soul with needless scruples, or make unavoidable or ordinary infirmities to seem such wilful hainous sins, as should quite break your settled peace. O how narrow is the path between these two mistaken rodes? and how hard a thing, and how rare is it to find it and to keep it in? For your self and all tender conscienc'd Christians that are heartily willing to be Ruled by Christ, I would perswade you equally to beware of both these: because

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ſome ſouls are as inclinable to the latter extream as to the former (during their troubles) But for the moſt Chriſtians in the world, I would have them firſt and principally avoid the former, and that with far greater diligence than the latter. For 1. Naturally all mens hearts are far proner to deal too remiſly, yea unfaithfully with themſelves in ſearching after their ſins, than too ſcrupulouſly and tenderly. The beſt men have ſo much pride and carnal ſelf love, that it will ſtrongly incline them to excuſe, or mince, or hide their ſins, and to think far lightlier and more favourably of it than they ſhould do, becauſe it is theirs. How was the caſe altered with *Judah* towards *Thamar*, when he once ſaw it was his own act? How was *David*'s zeal for Juſtice allaied, as ſoon as he heard, *Thou art the man?* This is the moſt common cauſe why God is fain to hold our eyes on our tranſgreſſions by force, becauſe we are ſo loth to do it more voluntarily: and why he openeth our ſin in ſuch crimſon and ſcarlet colours to us; becauſe we are ſo apt either to look on them as nothing, or to ſhut our eyes and over-look them: and why God doth hold us ſo long on the rack, becauſe we would ſtill eaſe our ſelves by ingenuous excuſes and extenuations: and why God doth break the skin ſo oft, and keep open our wounds; becauſe we are ſtill healing them by ſuch carnal ſhifts. This proud ſin-excuſing diſtemper needs no other proof or diſcovery, than our great tenderneſs and backwardneſs in ſubmitting to reproofs: How long do we excuſe ſin, and defend our pretended innocency, as long as we can find a word to ſay for it. Doth not daily experience of this ſad diſtemper even in moſt of the godly, diſcover fully to us, that moſt men (yea naturally all) are far proner to over-look their ſins, and deal faithfully and

negligently in the trial; than to be too tender, and to charge themselves too deep.

Besides, If a Christian be heartily willing to deal impartially, and search to the quick, yet the heart is lamentably deceitful, that he shall over-look much evil in it, when he hath done his best. And the Devil will be far more industrious to provoke and help you to hide, excuse and extenuate sin, than to open it, and see it as it is. His endeavour to drive poor souls into terrours, is usually but when he can no longer keep them in presumption: When he can hide their sin no longer, nor make it seem small, to keep them in impenitency, then he will make it seem unpardonable and remediless if he can; but usually not before. So that you see the frame of most mens spirits doth require them, to be rather over-jealous in searching after their sins, than over-careless and confident of themselves.

2. Besides this, I had rather of the two that Christians would suspect and search too much than too little, because there is an hundred times more danger in seeing sin less than it is, or over-looking it, than in seeing it greater than it is, and being over-fearful. The latter mistake may bring us into sorrow, and make our lives uncomfortable to us (and therefore should be avoided:) but usually it doth not endanger our happiness; but is often made a great occasion of our good. But the former mistake may hazard our everlasting salvation, and so bring us to remediless trouble.

3. Yea, lest you should say, *This is sad language to comfort a distressed wounded soul*, let me add this one Reason more. So far as I can learn by reading the Scriptures, and by long experience of very many souls under troubles of conscience, *It is most commonly some notable*

notable cherished corruption that breedeth and feedeth the sad uncomfortable estate of most professors, except those who by melancholy or very great ignorance, are so weak in their intellectuals, as that they are uncapable of making any true discovery of their condition, and of passing a right judgement upon themselves thereupon.

Lest I should make sad any soul that God would not have sad, let me desire you to observe, 1. That I say but *of most Professors*, not all: For I doubt not but God may hide his face for some time from some of the holiest and wisest of Believers, for several and great reasons. 2. Do but well observe most of the humble obedient Christians that you know to lie under any long and sad distress of mind, and you will find that they are generally of one of the two forementioned sorts: either so ignorant as not to know well what faith is, or what the conditions of the Covenant are, or what is the extent of the promise, or the full sufficiency of Christs satisfaction for all sinners, or what are the evidences by which they may try themselves: or else they are Melancholy persons, whose fancy is still molested with these perturbing vapours, and their understandings so clouded and distempered, that Reason is not free. And so common is this latter, that in my observation, of all the Christians that have lived in any long and deep distress of mind, six if not ten for one have been deeply Melancholy; except those that feed their troubles by disobedience. So that besides these ignorant and Melancholy persons, and disorderly declining Christians, the number of wounded spirits I think is very small, in comparison of the rest. Indeed it is usual for many at, or shortly after their first change to be under trouble and deep fears: But that is but while the sense of former sin is fresh upon their hearts. The sudden discovery of so

deep a guilt, and so great a danger, which a man did never know before, must needs amaze and affright the soul: and if that fear remain long where right means are either not known, or not used, for the cure, it is no wonder; and sometimes it will be long, if the righteſt means be used. But for those that have been long in the Profession of holiness, and yet lye, or fall again, under troubles of soul (except those before excepted) I would have them make a diligent search, whether God do not observe either some fleshly interest incroach upon his right, or some actual sin to be cherished in their hearts or conversations.

And here let me tell you, when you are making this search, what particulars they be which I would have you to be most jealous of. 1. The former sort which I call *contrary carnal interest incroaching on Christs Right*, are they that you must look after with far more diligence than your actual sins. 1. Because they are the far greatest and most dangerous of all sins, and the root of all the rest: for as God is the End and chief Good of every Saint, so these sins do stand up against him as our End and Chief Good; and carry away the soul by that Act which we call *simply willing, or complacency*, and so these interests are mens Idols, and resist Gods very Soveraignty and perfect Goodness, that is, They are against God himself as our God. Whereas those which I now call Actual sins, as distinct from these, are but the violation of particular Precepts, and against Gods Means and Laws directly, and but remotely, or indirectly against his Godhead: and they have but that act of our Will which we call *Election, Consent, or Use*, which is proper to Means, and not to the End. 2. Because as these sins are the most damnable,

so

ſo they lie deepeſt at the heart, and are not ſo eaſily diſcovered. It is ordinary with many to have a Covetous, Worldly, Ambitious heart, even damnably ſuch, that yet have wit to carry it fairly without; yea and ſeem truly Religious to themſelves and others. 3. Becauſe theſe ſins are the moſt common: For though they reign only in hypocrites and other unſanctified ones, yet they dwell too much in all men on earth.

If you now ask me what theſe ſins are: I anſwer, They are, as denominated from the Point or Term from which men turn, all compriſed in this one *Unwillingneſs of God, or the turning of the heart from God; or not loving God.* But as we denominate them from the Term or Object to which they run, they are all compriſed in this one, *Carnal ſelf-love*, or *turning to, and preferring our carnal ſelf before God*, and as it inclineth to action, all or moſt of it is comprehended in this one word *Fleſh-pleaſing*. But becauſe there are a Trinity of ſins in this Unity, we muſt conſider them diſtinctly. Three great Objects there are about which this ſin of *Fleſh-pleaſing* is exerciſed: 1. Credit or Honour. 2. Profit or Riches. 3. Senſual Pleaſure, more ſtrictly ſo called, conſiſting in the more immediate Pleaſing of the Senſes; Whereas the two firſt do more remotely pleaſe them by laying in Proviſion to that end: Otherwiſe all three are in the general but *Fleſh-pleaſing*. The three great ſins therefore that do moſt directly fight againſt God himſelf in his Soveraignty, are 1. Pride or Ambition. 2. Worldlineſs or love of Riches. 3. Senſuality, Voluptuouſneſs, or inordinate love of Pleaſures. There are in the *Underſtanding* indeed other ſins as directly againſt God as theſe, and more radical (as 1. Atheiſm, denying a God. 2. Polutheiſm, denying

denying our God to be the Alone God, and joyning others with him. 3. Idolatry, owning falſe Gods. 4. Infidelity, denying Jeſus Chriſt our Lord-Redeemer. 5. Owning falſe Saviours and Prophets, in his ſtead, or before him, as do the Mahometans. 6. Joyning other Redeemers and Saviours with him, as if he were not the alone Chriſt. 7. Denying the holy Ghoſt, and denying Credit to his holy and Miraculous Teſtimony to the Chriſtian Faith, and blaſphemouſly aſcribing all to the Devil: which is the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. 8. Owning and believing in Devils, or Lying ſpirits inſtead of the Holy Ghoſt: as the Montaniſts, Mahometans, Ranters, Familiſts do. 9. Owning and adjoyning Devils or Lying ſpirits in co-ordination or equality with the Holy Ghoſt, and believing equally his doctrine and theirs, as if he were not ſole and ſufficient in his Work. All theſe are ſins directly againſt God himſelf, and if prevalent, moſt certainly damning; three againſt the Father, three againſt the Son, and three againſt the Holy Ghoſt. But theſe be not they that I need now to warn you of. Theſe are prevalent only in Pagans, Infidels, and Blaſphemers. Your troubles and complaints ſhew that theſe are not predominant in you. It is therefore the three forementioned ſins of the Heart or Will that I would have you carefully to look after in your troubles, to ſee whether none of them get ground and ſtrength in you.

1. Enquire carefully into your humility. It is not for nothing that Chriſt hath ſaid ſo much of the excellency and neceſſity of this Grace; When he bids us learn of him to be meek and lowly: when he bleſſeth the meek and poor in ſpirit: when he ſetteth a little child in the midſt of them, and telleth them, Except they become as that child, they could not

not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: when he ſtoopeth to waſh and wipe his Diſciples feet, requiring them to do ſo by one another. How oft doth the Holy Ghoſt preſs this upon us? Commanding us, to ſubmit our ſelves to one another, and not to mind high things: but to condeſcend to men of low eſtate, *Rom.* 12.16. and not to be wiſe in our own eſteem, but in honour prefer others before our ſelves, *Rom.* 12. 10. How oft hath God profeſſed to reſiſt and take down the proud, and to give Grace to the Humble, and dwell with them? Search carefully therefore leſt this ſin get ground upon you. For though it may not be ſo predominant and raigning as to damn you, yet may it cauſe God to afflict you, and hide his face from you, and humble you by the ſenſe of his diſpleaſure, and the concealment of his Love. And though one would think that doubting troubled ſouls ſhould be alwaies the moſt humble, and freeſt from pride, yet ſad experience hath certified me, that much pride may dwell with great doubtings and diſtreſs of mind. Even ſome of the ſame ſouls that cry out of their own unworthineſs, and fear leſt they ſhall be firebrands of Hell, yet cannot endure a cloſe reproof, eſpecially for any diſgraceful ſin, nor cannot bear a diſparaging word, nor love thoſe, nor ſpeak well of them who do not value them, nor endure to be croſt or contradicted in word or deed, but muſt have all go their way, and follow their judgement, and ſay, as they ſay, and dance after their pipe, and their hearts riſe againſt thoſe that will not do it; much more againſt thoſe that ſpeak or do any thing to the diminiſhing of their Reputation: They cannot endure to be low, and paſt by, and over-looked when others are preferred before them, or to be

ſlighted

ſlighted and diſreſpected, or their words, or parts, or works, or judgements to be contemned or diſparaged: Nay ſome are ſcarce able to live in the ſame Houſe, or Church, or Town in love and peace with any but thoſe that will humour and pleaſe them, and ſpeak them fair, and give them ſmooth and ſtroaking language, and forbear croſſing, reproving and diſparaging them. Every one of theſe ſingly is an evident mark and fruit of pride; how much more all joyntly! I ſeriouſly profeſs it amazeth me to conſider how hainouſly moſt profeſſors are guilty of this ſin! even when they know it to be the Devils own ſin, and the great abomination hated of God, and read and hear ſo much againſt it as they do, and confeſs it ſo oft in their prayers to God, and yet not only inwardly cheriſh it, but in words, actions, geſtures, apparel, expreſs it, and paſſionately defend theſe diſcoveries of it. The confuſions and diſtractions in Church and State are nothing elſe but the proper fruits of it: ſo are the contentions among Chriſtians, and the unpeaceableneſs in families: *For only from pride cometh contention*, ſaith *Solomon*, *Prov.* 13. 10. For my part when I conſider the great meaſure of pride, ſelf-conceitedneſs, ſelf-eſteem, that is in the greateſt part of Chriſtians that ever I was acquainted with, (we of the Miniſtry not excepted) I wonder that God doth not afflict us more, and bring us down by foul means, that will not be brought down by fair. For my own part I have had as great means to help me againſt this ſin, as moſt men living have had; firſt in many years trouble of mind, and then in near twenty years languiſhing, and bodily pains, having been almoſt twenty times at the graves mouth, and living near it continually; and laſtly, and above all, I have had as full a ſight of it in

others,

others, even in the generality of Profeſſors, and in the doleful State of the Church and State, and hainous deteſtable abominations of this age, which one would think ſhould have fully cured it. And yet if I hear but either an applauding word from any of fame, on one ſide; or a diſparaging word on the other ſide, I am fain to watch my heart as narrowly as I would do the thatch of my houſe when fire is put to it, and preſently to throw on it the water of Deteſtation, Reſolution, and Recourſe to God: And though the acts through Gods great mercy be thus reſtrained, yet the conſtancy of theſe inclinations aſſures me, that there is ſtill a ſtrong and deep root. I beſeech you therefore, if you would ever have ſettled Peace and Comfort, be watchful againſt this ſin of Pride, and be ſure to keep it down, and get it mortified at the very heart.

2. The next ſin that I would have you be ſpecially jealous of, is covetouſneſs, or love of the profits or riches of the world. This is not the ſin of the rich only, but alſo of the poor: and more hainous is it in them to love the world inordinately that have ſo little of it, than in rich men that have more to tempt them: though dangerous in both. Nor doth it lie only in coveting that which is anothers, or in ſeeking to get by unlawful means; but alſo in over-valuing and over-loving the wealth of the world, though lawfully gotten. He that loveth the world (that is, above Chriſt and holineſs) the love of the Father is not in him (that is, ſavingly and ſincerely) 1 *Joh.* 2. 15. He that loveth Houſe or Lands better than Chriſt, cannot be his Diſciple. I beſeech you therefore when God hides his face, ſearch diligently, and ſearch again and again, leſt the world ſhould encroach on Chriſts intereſt in your heart: If it ſhould be

be ſo, can you wonder if Chriſt ſeem to withdraw, when you begin to ſet ſo light by him, as to value dung and earth in any compariſon with himſelf? May he not well ſay to you, *If you ſet ſo much by the world, take it, and ſee what it will do for you? If you can ſpare Me better than your Wealth, you ſhall be without me.* Muſt not the Lord Jeſus needs take it exceeding unkindly, that after all his love and bloodſhed, and pains with your heart, and ſeals of his kindneſs, anddiſcoveries of his Amiableneſs, and the Treaſures of his Kingdom, you ſhould now ſo much forget and ſlight him, to ſet up the world in any compariſon with him? and to give ſuch loving entertainment to his enemy? and look ſo kindly on a competitor? Is his glory worth no more than ſo? and hath he deſerved no better at your hands? Again, therefore do I beſeech you to be afraid, leſt you ſhould be guilty of this ſin. Examine, whether the thoughts of the world grow not ſweeter to you, and the thoughts of God and glory more unwelcome, and unpleaſing: whether you have not an eagerneſs after a fuller eſtate, and too keen an edge upon your deſires after riches, or at leaſt after a fuller portion and proviſion for your children: or after better accommodations and contentments in Houſe, Goods, or other worldly things? Do not worldly hopes delight you too much? and much more your worldly poſſeſſions? Are you not too buſily contriving how to be richer, forgetting Gods words? 1 *Tim.* 6. 8, 9, 17. Doth not the world eat out the life of your duties, that when you ſhould be ſerious with God, you have left your heart behind you, and drowned your affections in things below? Doth not your ſoul ſtick ſo faſt in this mud and clay, that you can ſcarce ſtir it Godward in Prayer or heavenly

heavenly Meditation? Do not you cut ſhort duties in your family and in ſecret, if not frequently omit them, that ſo you may be again at your worldly buſineſs? Or do you not cuſtomarily hurry them over, becauſe the world will not allow you leaſure to be ſerious? and ſo you have no time to deal in good earneſt with Chriſt or your ſoul? Do not your very ſpeeches of Chriſt and heaven grow few and ſtrange, becauſe the world muſt firſt be ſerved? When you ſee your brother have need, do you not ſhut up the bowels of your compaſſions from him? Doth not the love of the world make you hard to your ſervants, hard to thoſe you buy and ſell with? And doth it not incroach much on the Lords own day? Look after this earthly vice in all theſe diſcoveries: ſearch for your enemy in each of theſe corners. And if you find that this is indeed your caſe, you need not much wonder if Chriſt and you be ſtranger than heretofore. If this earth get between your heart and the Sun of Life, no wonder if all your comforts are in an Eclipſe; ſeeing your Light is but as the Moon's, a borrowed Light. And you muſt be the more carefull in ſearching after this ſin, both becauſe it is certain that all men have too much of it, and becauſe it is of ſo dangerous a nature, that ſhould it prevail it would deſtroy: For covetouſneſs is Idolatry. and among all the hainous ſins that the godly have fallen into, look into the Scripture, and tell me how many of them you find charged with covetouſneſs? And alſo, becauſe it is a blinding befooling ſin, not only drawing old men, and thoſe that have no children, and rich men, that have no need to purſue theſe things as madly as others; but alſo hiding it ſelf from their eyes, that moſt

that

that are guilty of it will not know it: Though, alas, if they were but willing, it were very eaſie to know it. But the power of the ſin doth ſo ſet awork their wits to find excuſes and fair names and titles for to cloak it, that many delude others by it, and more delude themſelves, but none can delude God. The caſe of ſome Profeſſors of Godlineſs that I have known is very lamentable in this point: who being generally noted for a dangerous meaſure of worldlineſs, by moſt that know them, could yet never be brought to acknowledge it in themſelves: Nay, by the excellency of their outward duties and diſcourſe, and the ſtrength of their wits (alas, ill imployed) and by their great ability of ſpeech, to put a fair gloſs on the ſouleſt of their actions, they have gone on ſo ſmoothly and plauſibly in their worldlineſs, that though moſt accuſed them of it behind their backs, yet no man knew how to faſten any thing on them. By which means they were hindered from repentance and recovery.

In this ſad caſe, though it be Gods courſe very often to let hypocrites and other enemies go on and proſper, becauſe they have their portion in this life, and the reckoning is to come; yet I have oft obſerved that for Gods own people, or thoſe that he means to make his people by their recovery, God uſeth to croſs them in their worldly deſires and deſigns: Perhaps he may let them thrive a while, and congratulate the proſperity of their fleſh, but at laſt he breaks in ſuddenly on their wealth, and ſcatters it abroad, or addeth ſome croſs to it that imbitters all to them, and then asketh them, *Where is now your Idol?* and then they begin to ſee their folly. If you do dote on any thing below, to the neglecting of God, he will make a Rod for you of that very thing

thing you dote upon, and by it will he ſcourge you home to himſelf.

3. The third great heart-ſin which I would have you jealous of, is Senſuality or Voluptuouſneſs, or pleaſing the ſenſes inordinately, The two former are in this the more mortal ſins, in that they carry more of the Underſtanding and Will with them, and make Reaſon it ſelf to be ſerviceable to them in their workings; whereas ſenſuality is more in the fleſh, and paſſion, and hath oft times leſs aſſiſtance of Reaſon or Conſent of the Will. Yet is the Will tainted with ſenſual inclinations, and both Reaſon and Will are at the beſt guilty of connivance, and not exerciſing their authority over the ſenſual part. But in this ſenſuality is the more dangerous vice, in that it hath ſo ſtrong and inſeparable a ſeat as our ſenſual appetite; and in that it acteth ſo violently and ragingly as it doth; ſo that it beareth down a weak oppoſition of Reaſon and Will, and carrieth us on blindfold, and transformeth us into bruits. I will not here put the Queſtion concerning the groſs acting of this ſin (of that anon:) but I would have you very jealous of a ſenſual diſpoſition. When a man cannot deny his appetite what it would have; or at leaſt, covetouſneſs can do more in reſtraining it, than conſcience: When a man cannot make a Covenant with his eyes, but muſt gaze on every alluring object: When the fleſh draws to forbidden pleaſures, in meats, drinks, apparel, recreations, laſciviouſneſs, and all the conſiderations of Reaſon cannot reſtrain it; this is a ſad caſe: and God may well give over ſuch to ſadneſs of heart. If we walk ſo pleaſingly to the fleſh, God will walk more diſpleaſingly to us.

And as you ſhould be jealous of theſe great heart-

tranſgreſſions, ſo ſhould you be of particular actual ſins. Examine whether the jealous eye of God ſee not ſomething that much offendeth him, and cauſeth your heavineſs. I will not enlarge ſo far as to mind you of the particular ſins that you ſhould look after, ſeeing it muſt be All, and your obedience muſt be univerſal. Only one I will give you a hint of. I have obſerved God ſometimes ſhew himſelf moſt diſpleaſed and angry to theſe Chriſtians, who have the leaſt tenderneſs and compaſſion towards the infirmities of others. He that hath made the forgiving others a neceſſary condition of Gods forgiving us, will ſurely withdraw the ſenſe of our forgiveneſs, when we withdraw our forgiveneſs and compaſſion to men. He that caſts the unmerciful ſervant into Hell, who takes his fellow-ſervant by the throat, will threaten us, and frown upon us, if we come but neer it. *Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy. He ſhall have judgement without mercy that ſhewеth no mercy*, Jam. 2. 13. Study well, *Rom.* 14. & 15. Chapters, and *Gal.* 6. which the proud, cenſorious, ſelf-eſteeming Profeſſors of this age have ſtudied ſo little, and will not underſtand. When we deal ſourly and churliſhly with our weak brethren, and inſtead of winning an offendor by love, we will vilifie him, and diſdain him, and ſay, *How can ſuch a man have any Grace?* and will think and ſpeak hardly of thoſe that do but cheriſh any hopes that he may be gracious, or ſpeak of him with tenderneſs and compaſſion; no wonder if God force the conſciences of ſuch perſons to deal as churliſhly and ſourly with them, and to clamour againſt them, and ſay, *How canſt thou have any true grace, who haſt ſuch ſins as theſe?* When our Lord himſelf dealt away ſo tenderly with ſinners, that it gave occaſion to the ſlanderous Phariſees to ſay, He

was

was *a friend of Publicans and Sinners:* (and ſo he was; even their greateſt friend.) And his command to us is, *We then that are ſtrong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe our ſelves: Let every one of us pleaſe his neighbour for his good to edification: For even Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf,* Rom. 15. 1, 2, 3. And *Gal.* 6. 1, 2. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are ſpiritual reſtore ſuch a one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted. Bear ye one anothers burden, and ſo fulfill the Law of Chriſt.* When people can bear with almoſt no infirmity in a neighbour, in a ſervant, or in their neereſt friends, but will make the worſt of every fault, no wonder if God make ſuch feel their dealings with others, by his dealings with them. Had ſuch that Love to their pooreſt brethren, which thinketh no evil, and ſpeaketh not evil, which *ſuffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not it ſelf, is not puffed up, behaveth not it ſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,* 1 Cor. 13. 4, 5, 7. Had we more of this love, which covereth a multitude of Infirmities; God would cover our Infirmities the more, and tell us of them, and trouble us for them the leſs.

To this ſin I may add another, which is ſcarce another, but partly the ſame with this, and partly its immediate effect: and that is, *Unpeaceableneſs and unquietneſs with thoſe about us*; This commonly occaſioneth God to make us, as unpeaceable and unquiet in our ſelves. When people are ſo froward, and peeviſh, and troubleſom, that few can live in peace with them, either in family or neighbourhood, except thoſe that have little to do with them, or thoſe that can humour them in all things, and have

an extraordinary skill in ſmooth ſpeaking, flattering or man-pleaſing, ſo that neighbours, ſervants, children, and ſometimes their own yoak-fellows, muſt be gone from them, and may not abide near them, as a man gets out of the way from a wild beaſt or a mad dog, or avoideth the flames of a raging fire; is it any wonder if God give theſe people as little peace in their own ſpirits, as they give to others? When people are ſo hard to be pleaſed, that no body about them or near them can tell how to fit their humours; neighbours cannot pleaſe them, ſervants cannot pleaſe them, Husband or Wife cannot pleaſe each other; every word is ſpoke amiſs, and every thing done amiſs to them; what wonder if God ſeem hard to be pleaſed, and as frequently offended with them? eſpecially if their unpeaceableneſs trouble the Church, and in their turbulency and ſelf-conceitedneſs, they break the peace thereof.

Thus I have told you what ſins you muſt look after when you find your peace broken, and your conſcience diſquieted; ſearch carefully leſt ſome iniquity lie at the root. Some I know will think that it is an unſeaſonable diſcourſe to a troubled conſcience, to mind them ſo much of their ſins, which they are apt to look at too much already. But to ſuch I anſwer, either thoſe ſins are mortified and forſaken, or not: If they be, then theſe are not the perſons that I ſpeak of, whoſe trouble is fed by continued ſin: But I ſhall ſpeak more to them anon. If not, then it ſeems for all their trouble of conſcience, ſin is not ſufficiently laid to heart yet.

The chieſeſt thing therefore that I intend in all this diſcourſe, is this following advice to thoſe that upon ſearch do find themſelves guilty in any of

theſe

these cases. *As ever you would have peace of conscience, set your selves presently against your sins: And do not either mistakingly cry out of one sore, when it is another that is your malady; nor yet spend your daies in fears and disquietness of mind, and fruitless complainings, and in the mean time continue in wilful sinning: but resist sin more, and torment your minds less: and break off your sin and your terrours together.*

In these words I tell you what must be done for your cure; and I warn you of two sore mistakes of many sad Christians hereabouts. The cure lieth in breaking off sin, to the utmost of your power. This is the *Aeban* that disquieteth all. It is Gods great mercy that he disquieteth you in sinning, and gives you not over to so deep a slumber, and peace in sin, as might hinder your repentance and reformation. The dangerous mistakes here are these two.

1. Some do as the Lapwing, cry loudest when they are furthest from the nest: and complain of an aking tooth, when the disease is in the head or heart. They cry out, *O I have such wandring thoughts in prayer, and such a bad memory, and so hard a heart that I cannot weep for sin; or such doubts and fears, and so little sense of the Love of God, that I doubt I have no true Grace:* When they should rather say, *I have so proud a heart, that God is fain by these sad means to humble me: I am so high in mine own eyes, so wise in my own conceit, and so tender of my own esteem and credit, that God is fain to make me base in my own eyes, and to abhorr my self. I am so worldly and in love with earth, that it draws away my thoughts from God, dulls my love, and spoils all my duties. I am so sensual, that I venture sooner to displease my God, than*

my flesh; I have so little compassion on the infirmities of neighbours and servants, and other brethren, and deal so censoriously, churlishly and unmercifully with them, that God is fain to hide his mercy from me, and speak to me as in anger, and vex me as in sore displeasure. I am so froward, peevish, quarrelsom, unpeaceable and hard to be pleased, that it is no wonder if I have no peace with God, or in my own conscience; and if I have so little quietness who love and seek it no more. Many have more reason, I say, to turn their complaints into this tune.

2. Another most common unhappy miscarriage of sad Christians lieth here, that *They will rather continue complaining and self-tormenting, than give over sinning, so far as they might give it over if they would.* I beseech you in the Name of God, to know and consider what it is that God requireth of you. He doth not desire your vexation, but your reformation. No further doth he desire the trouble of your mind, than as it tendeth to the avoiding of that sin which is the cause of it. God would have you less in your fears and troubles, and more in your obedience. Obey more, and disquiet your mind less. Will you take this counsel presently, and see whether it will not do you more good, than all the complaints and doubtings of your whole life have done. Set your self with all your might against your pride, worldliness and sensuality, your unpeaceableness and want of love, and tenderness to your Brethren; and whatever other sin your conscience is acquainted with. I pray you tell me, if you had gravel in your shooe, in your travel, would it not be more wisdom, to sit down and take off your shooe, and cast it out, than to stand still or go complaining, and tell every one you meet of your soreness? If you have a thorn

thorn in your foot, will you go on halting and lamenting? or will you pull it out? Truly ſin is the thorn in your conſcience: and thoſe that would not have ſuch troubled conſciences told of their ſins for fear of increaſing their diſtreſs, are unskilful comforters; and will continue the trouble while the thorn is in. As ever you would have peace then, reſolve againſt ſin to the utmoſt of your power: Never excuſe it, or cheriſh it, or favour it more. Confeſs it freely. Thank thoſe that reprove you for it. Deſire thoſe about you to watch over you, and to tell you of it: yea to tell you of all ſuſpitious ſigns that they ſee of it, though it be not evident. And if you do not ſee ſo much Pride, Worldlineſs, Unpeaceableneſs or other ſins in our your ſelf, as your friends think they ſee in you, yet let their judgement make you jealous of your heart; ſeeing ſelf-love doth oft ſo blind us that we cannot ſee that evil in our ſelves, which others ſee in us: nay, which all the Town may take notice of. And be ſure to engage your friends that they ſhall not ſmooth over your faults, or mince them, and tell you of them in extenuating language, which may hinder Conviction and Repentance; much leſs ſilence them, for fear of diſpleaſing you: but that they will deal freely and faithfully with you. And ſee that you diſtaſte them no', and diſcountenance not their plain dealing, leſt you diſcourage them, and deprive your ſoul of ſo great a benefit. Think beſt of thoſe as your greateſt friends, who are leaſt friends to your ſin, and do moſt for your recovery from it. If you ſay, *Alas, I am not able to mortifie my ſins: It is not in my power.* I anſwer, 1. I ſpeak not of a perfect conqueſt; nor of a freedom from every paſſion or infirmity. 2. Take heed of pretending diſability

when it is unwillingneſs. If you were heartily willing you would be able to do much, and God would ſtrengthen you. Cannot you reſiſt Pride, Worldlineſs and Senſuality if you be Willing? Cannot you forbear moſt of the actual ſins you commit, and perform the duties that you omit, if you be Willing? (though not ſo well as you would perform them?) Yea let me ſay thus much, leſt I endanger you by ſparing you: Many a miſerable hypocrite doth live in trouble of mind and complaining, and after all periſh for their wilful diſobedience. Did not the rich young man go far before he would break off with Chriſt? and when he did leave him, he went away ſorrowful. And what was the cauſe of his ſorrow? Why the matter was, that he could not be ſaved without ſelling all, and giving it to the poor, when he had great Poſſeſſions. It was not that he could not be rid of his ſin: but that he could not have Chriſt and Heaven without forſaking the world. This is the caſe of unſanctified perſons that are enlightened to ſee the need of Chriſt, but are not weaned from worldly profits, honours and pleaſures; they are perhaps troubled in mind, (and I cannot blame them) but it is not that they cannot leave ſinning, but that they cannot have Heaven without leaving their delights and contentments on earth. Sin as ſin they would willingly leave: For no man can love evil as evil. But their fleſhly profits, honours and pleaſures they will not leave; and there is the ſtop: and this is the cauſe of their ſorrows and fears. For their own judgement cries out againſt them, *He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him: If ye live after the fleſh ye ſhall die. God reſiſteth the proud.* This is the voice of their informed underſtandings: And conſcience ſeconds it, and ſaith, *Thou art the man.*

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But the flesh cries louder than both these, *Wilt thou have thy pleasures? wilt thou undo thy self? wilt thou be made a scorn or laughing stock to all?* Or rather it strongly draws and provoketh, when it hath nothing to say: No wonder if this poor sinner be here in a strait, and live in distress of mind. But as long as the flesh holds so fast, that all this conviction and trouble will not cause it to lose its hold, the poor soul is still in the bonds of iniquity. The case of such an hypocrite or half-Christian is like the case of the poor Papist, that having glutted himself with flesh in the Lent, was in this strait, that either he must vomit it up, and so disclose his fault and undergo penance; or else he must be sick of his surfeit, and hazard his life: But he resolveth rather to venture on the danger, than to bear the penance. Or their case is like that of a proud woman, that hath got on a strait garment, or a pinching shooe, and because she will not be out of the fashion, she will rather chuse to bear the pain, though she halt or suffer at every step. Or like the more impudent sort of them who will endure the cold, and perhaps hazard their lives, by the nakedness of their necks, and breasts, and arms, rather than they will controul their shameless pride, What cure now should a wise man wish to such people as these? Surely, that the shooe might pinch yet a little harder, till the pain might force them to cast it of. And that they might catch some cold that would pay them for their folly (so it would but spite their lives) till it should force them to be ashamed of their pride, and cover their nakedness: Even so when disobedient hypocrites do complain that they are afraid they have no grace, and afraid God doth not pardon them, and will not save them, I should tell them, if I knew them, that I am afraid

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ſo too: and that it is not without cauſe; and deſire that their fears were ſuch as might affright them from their diſobedience, and force them to caſt away their wilful ſinning. I have ſaid the more on this Point, becauſe I know if this advice do but help you to mortifie your ſin, the beſt and greateſt work is done, whether you get Aſſurance and Comfort or no: and withall that it is the moſt probable means to this Aſſurance and Comfort.

I ſhould next have warned you of the other extream, *viz.* needleſs ſcruples; but I mean to make that a peculiar Direction by it ſelf, when I have firſt added a little more of this great means of Peace, *A ſound Obedience.*

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DIRECTION XXIV.

24. My next advice for the obtaining of a ſettled Peace and Comfort, is this: [*Take heed that you content not your ſelf with a cheap courſe of Religion, and ſuch a ſerving of God, as coſteth you little or nothing: But in your abſtaining from ſin, in your riſing out of ſin, and in your diſcharge of Duty, incline moſt to that way which is moſt Self-denying, and diſpleaſing to the fleſh (ſo you be ſure it be a lawful way.) And when you are called out to any work which will ſtand you in extraordinary labour and coſt, you muſt be ſo far from ſhrinking and drawing your neck out of the yoke, that you muſt look upon it as a ſpecial price that is put into your hand, and a ſingular advantage and opportunity for the increaſe of your comforts.*]

THis Rule is like the reſt of the Chriſtian Doctrine, which is not throughly underſtood by any way but experience. Libertines and ſenſual Profeſſors that never tried it, did never well underſtand it. I could find in my heart to be large in explaining and applying it, but that I have been ſo large beyond my firſt intentions in the former Directions, that I will cut off the reſt as ſhort as I well can.

Let none be ſo wickedly injurious to me, as to ſay,

ſay I ſpeak or think of any Merit, properly ſo called, in any the coſtlieſt work of man: Faſten not that on me which I both diſclaim, and deſire the Reader to take heed of. But I muſt tell you theſe two things:

1. That a cheap Religion is a far more uncertain evidence of ſincerity, than a dear. It will not diſcover ſo well to a mans own ſoul, whether he prefer Chriſt before the world, and whether he take him and his Benefits for his Portion and Treaſure.

2. That a cheap Religion is not uſually accompanied with any notable degree of Comforts, although the perſon be a ſincere-hearted Chriſtian.

Every Hypocrite can ſubmit to a Religion that will coſt him little? much more which will get Reputation with men of greateſt Wiſdom and Piety: Yea he may ſtick to it, ſo it will not undo him in the world. If a man have knowledge, and gifts of utterance, and ſtrength of body, it is no coſtly matter to ſpeak many good words, or to be earneſt in oppoſing the ſins of others, and to preach zealouſly and frequently (much more if he have double honour by it, Reverent Obedience, and Maintenance, as Miniſters of the Goſpel have, or ought to have.) It is hard to diſcern ſincerity in ſuch a courſe of Piety and Duty. Wo to thoſe Perſecutors that ſhall put us to the Trial, how far we can go in ſuffering for Chriſt: but it ſhould be a matter of Rejoycing to us, when we are put upon it. To be patient in Tribulation is not enough: But to rejoyce in it, is alſo the duty of a Saint. Let thoſe, that think this draweth men to Rejoyce too much in themſelves, but hear what the Lord Jeſus himſelf ſaith, and his Spirit in his Apoſtles, *Matth.* 5. 10, 11, 12. *Bleſſed are they which*

which are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, for theirs the Kingdom of Heaven. Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you and perſecute you, and ſay all manner of evil ſayings againſt you falſly for my Names ſake: Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven,] James 1. 2, 3, 12. *My Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations* (not inward temptations of the Devil and our Luſt, but trials by perſecution:) *knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he ſhall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him.*] See *Luke* 6. 23. 1 *Pet.* 4. 13. *Acts* 5. 41. 2 *Cor.* 6. 10. & 7. 4. *Col.* 1. 11. *Heb.* 10. 34. 2 *Cor.* 13. 9. & 12. 15. O how glorioufly doth a tried faith ſhine, to the comfort of the Believer, and the admiration of the Beholders? How eaſily may a Chriſtian try himſelf at ſuch a time when God is trying him? One hours experience when we have found that our faith can endure the furnace, and that we can hazard or let go all for Chriſt, will more effectually reſolve all our doubtings of our ſincerity, than many a months trial by meer queſtioning of our own deceitful hearts.

Object. But (you may ſay) what if God call me not to ſuffering or hazards? muſt I caſt my ſelf upon it without a Call? or muſt I be therefore without Comfort?

Anſw. No; you ſhall not need to caſt your ſelf upon ſuffering; nor yet to be without Comfort for want of it. I know no man but may ſerve God at dearer rates to the fleſh than moſt of us do, without ſtepping out of the way of his duty: Nay, he muſt do it, except he will avoid his duty. Never had the Church yet ſuch times of proſperity, but that faithful

duty would hazard men, and cause their trouble in the flesh. Can you not, nay, ought you not to put your self to greater labour for mens souls? If you should but go day after day among the poor ignorant people where you live, and instruct them in the knowledge of God, and bear with all their weakness and rudeness, and continue thus with Patience, this might cost you some labour, and perhaps contempt from many of the unthankful: and yet you should not do more than your duty, if you have opportunity for it, as most have, or may have, if they will. If you should further hire them to learn Catechisms; if you should extend your liberality to the utmost for relief of the poor, this would cost you somewhat. If you carry on every Just Cause with Resolution, though never so many great friends would draw you to betray it: this may cost you the loss of those friends. If you would but deal plainly with the ungodly, and against all sin, as far as you have opportunity, especially if it be the sins of Rulers and Gentlemen of name and power in the world; it may cost you somewhat. Nay, though you were Embassadours of Christ, whose office is to deal plainly, and not to please men in evil upon pain of Christs displeasure; you may perhaps turn your great friends to be your great enemies. Go to such a Lord, or such a Knight, or such a Gentleman, and tell him freely, that God looketh for another manner of spending his time than in hunting and hawking, and sporting and feasting, and that this precious time must be dearly reckoned for: Tell him, that God looks he should be the most eminent in holiness, and in a heavenly life, and give an example thereof to all that are below him, as God hath made him more eminent in worldly dignity and possessions. Tell him, that where much is given, much is required; and that

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a low profeſſion, and dull approbation of that which is good, will ſerve no man, much leſs ſuch a man. Tell him, that his Riches muſt be expended to feed and cloath the poor, and promote good uſes, and not meerly for himſelf and family, or elſe he will make but a ſad account: and that he muſt freely engage his reputation, eſtate and life, and all for Chriſt and his Goſpel, when he calls you to it; yea and forſake all for him, if Chriſt put him to it, or elſe he can be no Diſciple of Chriſts: and then what good will his Honours and Riches do him, when his ſoul ſhall be called for? Try this courſe with Great men, yea with Great men that ſeem Religious, and that no further than faithfulneſs and compaſſion to mens ſouls doth bind you, and do it with all the wiſdom you can, that is not carnal; and then tell me what it doth coſt you. Let thoſe Miniſters that are near them, plainly and roundly tell both the Parliament-men, and Commanders of the Army, of their unqueſtionable tranſgreſſions, and that according to their nature, (and wo to them if they do not) and then let them tell me what it doth coſt them. Alas Sirs, how great a number of Profeſſors are baſe, daubing, ſelf-ſeeking Hypocrites, that cull out the ſafe, the cheap, the eaſie part of duty, and leave all the reſt! And ſo ordinarily is this done, that we have made us a new Chriſtianity by it; and the Religion of Chriſts own making, the ſelf-denying courſe preſcribed by our Maſter, is almoſt unknown; and he that ſhould practiſe it would be taken for a mad man, or ſome ſelf conceited Cynick, or ſome ſaucy, if not ſeditious fellow. It is not therefore becauſe Chriſt hath not preſcribed us a more ſelf denying, hazardous, laborious way, that men ſo commonly take up in the Cheapeſt Religion: but it is through our falſe-

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heartedneſs to Chriſt, and the ſtrength of ſenſual carnal Intereſts in us, which make us put falſe Interpretations on the plaineſt precepts of Chriſt which charge any unpleaſing duty on us, and Familiſtically turn them into Allegories, or at leaſt we will not yield to obey him. And truly, I think that our ſhifting off Chriſt in this unworthy manner, and even altering that very frame and nature of Chriſtian Religion (by turning that into a fleſh-pleaſing Religion, which is more againſt the fleſh than all the Religions elſe in the world) and dealing ſo reſervedly, ſuperficially and unfaithfully in all his work, is a great cauſe why Chriſt doth now appear no more openly for men, and pour out no larger a meaſure of his Spirit in Gifts and Conſolations. When men appeared ordinarily in the moſt open manner for Chriſt, in greateſt dangers and ſufferings, then Chriſt appeared more openly and eminently for them (yet is none more for meekneſs, humility and love, and againſt unmerciful or dividing zeal, than Chriſt.)

2. And as you ſee that a cheap Religiouſneſs doth not ſo diſcover ſincerity: ſo ſecondly, it is not accompanied with that ſpecial bleſſing of God. As God hath engaged himſelf in his Word, that they ſhall not loſe their Reward that give but a cup of water in his Name: ſo he hath more fully engaged himſelf to thoſe that are moſt deeply engaged for him; even that they that forſake all for him, ſhall have manifold recompence in this life, and in the world to come eternal life. Let the experience of all the world of Chriſtians be produced, and all will atteſt the ſame truth, That it is Gods uſual courſe to give men larger Comforts in dearer duties, than in cheap: Nay, ſeldom doth he give large Comforts in cheap duties: and ſeldom doth he deny them in dearer:

dearer: ſo be it they are not made dear by our own ſin and fooliſh indiſcretion, but by his command, and our faithfulneſs in obeying him. Who knows not that the Conſolation of Matters is uſually above other mens, who hath read of their ſufferings and ſtrange ſuſtentations? Chriſtian, do but try this by thy own experiences, and tell me, when thou haſt moſt reſolutely followed Chriſt in a good Cauſe; when thou haſt ſtood againſt the faces of the greateſt for God; when thou haſt caſt thy life, thy family and eſtate upon Chriſt, and run thy ſelf into the moſt apparent hazards for his ſake: haſt thou not come off with more inward peace and comfort, than the cheaper part of thy Religion hath afforded thee? When thou haſt ſtood to the Truth and Goſpel, and haſt done good through the greateſt oppoſition, and loſt thy greateſt and deareſt friends, becauſe thou wouldſt not forſake Chriſt and his ſervice, or deal falſly in ſome Cauſe that he hath truſted thee in: haſt thou not come off with the bleſſing of Peace of Conſcience? Nay, when thou haſt denied thy moſt importunate Appetite, and moſt croſſed thy luſts, and moſt humbled and abaſed thy ſelf for God, and denied thy credit, and taken ſhame to thy ſelf in a free confeſſing of thy faults, or patiently put up the greateſt abuſes, or humbled and tamed thy fleſh by neceſſary abſtinence, or any way moſt diſpleaſed it, by croſſing its intereſt, by bountiful giving, laborious duty, dangers or ſufferings for the ſake of the Lord Jeſus, his Truth and People: hath it not been far better with thee in thy Peace and Comforts than before? I know ſome will be ready to ſay, That may be from Carnal Pride in our own doing or ſuffering, I anſwer: It may be ſo; And therefore let all watch againſt that. But I am certain that this is

Gods ordinarily dealing with his people, and therefore we may ordinarily expect it: It is for their encouragement in faithful duty; and I may truly say, for their Reward, when himself calls that a Reward which he gives for a cup of water. Lay well to heart that Example of *Abraham*, for which he is so often extolled in the Scripture, *viz.* his readiness to sacrifice his only Son: This was a dear Obedience: *And*, saith God, *Because* (mark *Because*) *thou hast done this thing, in blessing I will bless thee, &c. David* would not offer to God that which cost him nothing, 2 *Sam.* 24. 24. 1 *Chron.* 21. 24. God will have the best of your hearts, the best of your labours, the best of your estates, the best of all, or he will not accept it. *Abels* sacrifice was of the best, and it was accepted: And God saith to *Cain*, *If thou do well, shalt not thou be accepted?*

Seeing this is so, let me advise you; Take it not for a calamity, but for a precious advantage, when God calls thee to a hazardous costly service, which is like to cost thee much of thy estate, to cost thee the loss of thy chiefest friends, the loss of thy credit, the indignation of Great ones, or the painfullest diligence and trouble of body: Shift it not off, but take this opportunity thankfully, lest thou never have such another for the clearing of thy sincerity, and the obtaining of more than ordinary Consolations from God: Thou hast now a prize in thy hand for spiritual riches, if thou hast but a heart to improve it. I know all this is a paradox to the unbelieving world: But here is the very excellency of the Christian Religion, and the Glory of Faith. It looks for its greatest spoils, and richest prizes from its Conquests of fleshly Interests: It is not only able to do it, but it expecteth its advancement and consolations by this

way.

way. It is engaged in a war with the world and flesh; and in this war it plaies not the vapouring fencer, that seems to do much, but never strikes home, as Hypocrites and carnal worldly Professors do: but he saies it home, and spares not, as one that knows, That the fleshes ruine must be his rising, and the fleshes thriving would be his Ruine. In these things the true Christian alone is in good sadness, and all the rest of the world but in jest. The Lord pitty poor deluded souls! You may see by this one thing, how rare a thing true Christianity is among the Multitude that take themselves for Christians! and how certain therefore it is that few shall be saved! Even this one point of true Mortification, and Self-denial, is a stranger among the most of Professors. Oh how sad a testimony of it are the actions of these late times, wherein so much hath been done for self, and safety, and carnal interests, and so little for Christ! yea, and that after the deepest engagements of Mercies and Vows that ever lay on a people in the world: Insomuch that through the just Judgement of God they are now given up to doubt, whether it be the duty of Rulers to do any thing as Rulers for Christ, or no? or whether they should not let Christ alone to do it himself? Well, this which is such a mysterie to the unregenerate world, is a thing that every genuine Christian is acquainted with: for they that are Christs have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof; and the world is dead to them, & they to the world, *Gal.* 6. 11.

Take this counsel therefore in all the several cases mentioned in the Direction.

1. In your preventing sin, and maintaining your Innocency, if you cannot do it without denying your credit, and exposing your self to disgrace; or without the loss of friends, or a breach in your estate, do it

nevertheless: Yea, if it would cost you your utter ruine in the world, thank God that put such an opportunity into your hand for extraordinary consolations: For ordinarily the Martyrs comforts exceed other mens, as much as their burden of duty and suffering doth. *Cyprian* is fain to write for the comfort of some Christians in his times, that at death were troubled that they mist of their hopes of Martyrdom. So also if you cannot mortifie any lust without much pinching the flesh, do it chearfully; for the dearer the victory costeth you, the sweeter will be the issue and review.

2. The same counsel I give you also in your rising from sin. It is the sad condition of those that yield to a Temptation, and once put their foot within the doors of Satan, that they ensnare themselves so, that they must undergo thrice as great difficulties to draw back, as they needed to have done before-hand for prevention and forbearance. Sin unhappily engageth the sinner to go on; and one sin doth make another seem necessary. O how hard a thing is it for him that wrong'd another by stealing, deceit, over-reaching in bargaining, or the like, to confess his fault, and ask him forgiveness, and to the utmost of his ability to make restitution! What abundance of difficulties will be in the way? It will likely cost him the loss of his Credit, besides the breach in his estate, and perhaps lay him open to the rage of him that he hath wronged. Rather he will be drawn to cover his sin with a Lye, or at least by Excuses. And so it is in many other sins. Now in any of these Cases, when men indulge the flesh, and cannot find in their hearts to take that loss or shame to themselves, which a through-Repentance doth require, they do but feed the troubles of their soul, and hide their wounds and sores, and

not

not eaſe them. Uſually ſuch perſons go on in a galled unpeaceable condition, and reach not to ſolid Comfort: (I ſpeak only of thoſe to whom ſuch Confeſſion or Reſtitution is a duty.) And I cannot wonder at it: For they have great cauſe to queſtion the truth of that Repentance, and conſequently the ſoundneſs of that heart, which will not bring them to a ſelf-denying duty, nor to Gods way of riſing from their ſin. It ſeems at preſent the intereſt of the fleſh is actually predominant, when no reaſon or Conviction will perſwade them to contradict it. As ever you would have ſound Comfort then in ſuch a Caſe as this, ſpare not the fleſh. When you have ſinned, you muſt riſe again or periſh. If you cannot riſe without faſting, without free confeſſing, without the utter ſhameing of our ſelves, without reſtitution; never ſtick at it. This is your hour of Trial: O yield not in the Conflict. The dearer the Victory coſteth you, the greater will be your peace. Try it; and if you find it not ſo, I am miſtaken. Yet if you have ſinned ſo that the opening of it may more diſcredit the Goſpel, than your Confeſſion will honour it, and yet your Conſcience is unquiet, and urgeth you to confeſs; in ſuch a caſe be firſt well informed, and proceed warily and upon deliberation; and firſt open the caſe to ſome faithful Miniſter or able Chriſtian in ſecret, that you may have good advice.

3. The ſame counſel alſo would I give you in the performance of your duty. A Magiſtrate is convinced he muſt puniſh ſinners, and put down Alehouſes, and be true to every Juſt Cauſe: but then he muſt ſteel his face againſt all mens reproaches, and the ſolicitations of all friends. A Miniſter is convinced that he muſt teach from houſe to houſe, as well as publickly, if he be able; and that he muſt

deal plainly with sinners according to their conditions; yea and require the Church to avoid communion with them, if they be obstinate in evil after other sufficient means: But then he shall lose the Love of his People, and be accounted Proud, Precise, Rigid, Lordly, and perhaps lose his maintenance. Obey God now; and the dearer it costeth you, the more Peace and Protection, and the larger blessing may you expect from God: For you do (as it were) oblige God the more to stick to you; as you will take your self obliged to own, and bear out, and reward those that hazard state, and credit, and life for you. And if you cannot obey God in such a Trial, it is a sad sign of a false-hearted Hypocrite, except your fall be only in a temptation, from which you rise with renewed Repentance and Resolutions, which will conquer for the time to come. As *Peter*, who being left to himself for an example of humane frailty, and that Christ might have no friend to stick by him when he suffered for our sin, yet presently wept bitterly, and afterward spent his strength and time in preaching Christ, and laid down his life in *Martyrdom* for him.

So perhaps many a poor servant, or hard labourer, hath scarce any time except the Lords day to Pray, or Read. Let such pinch the flesh a little the more (so they do not overthrow their health) and either work the harder, or fare the harder, or be cloathed the more meanly, or especially break a little of their sleep, that they may find some time for these duties; and try whether the Peace and Comfort will not Recompence it. Never any man was a loser for God. So private Christians cannot conscionably discharge the great plain duty of Reproof and Exhortation; lovingly, yet plainly telling their friends and neighbours

hours of their ſins, and danger, and duty, but they will turn friends into foes, and poſſibly ſet all the Town on their heads. But is it a Duty, or is it not? If it be, then truſt God with the Iſſue, and do your work, and ſee whether he will ſuffer you to be lôſers.

For my part I think, that if Chriſtians took Gods work before them, and ſpared the fleſh leſs, and truſted themſelves and all to Chriſt alone, and did not balk all the troubleſom coſtly part of Religion, and that which moſt croſſeth the intereſt of the fleſh; it would be more ordinary with them to be filled with the joyes of the Holy Ghoſt, and walk in that Peace of Conſcience which is a Continual Feaſt: and to have ſuch full and frequent views both of the ſincerity of their Evidencing Graces, and of Gods Reconciled Face, as would baniſh their doubts and fears, and be a greater help to their certainty of ſalvation, than much other labour doth prove. If you flinch not the fiery furnace, you ſhall have the company of the Son of God in it. If you flinch not the Priſon and Stocks, you may be able to ſing as *Paul* and *Silas* did. If you refuſe not to be ſtoned with *Stephen*, you may perhaps ſee Heaven opened as he did. If you think theſe Comforts ſo dear bought, that you will rather venture without them; let me tell you, you may take your courſe, but the end will convince you to the very heart, of the folly of your choice. Never then complain for want of Comfort; remember you might have had it, and would not. And let me give you this with you: You will ſhortly find, though worldly Pleaſures, Riches and Honours were ſome ſlight ſalves to your moleſted Conſcience here, yet there will no cure nor caſe for it be found hereafter. Your merry hours will then all be gone, and your worldly Delights forſake you in Diſtreſs: but theſe ſolid Com-

ſorts which you judged too dear, would have ended in the Everlaſting Joyes of Glory. When men do flinch God and his Truth in ſtraits, and juggle with their Conſciences, and will take out all the honourable, eaſie, cheap part of the work of Chriſt, and make a Religion of that by it ſelf, leaving out all the diſgraceful, difficult, chargeable, ſelf-denying part; and hereupon call themſelves Chriſtians, and make a great ſhew in the world with this kind of Religiouſneſs, and take themſelves injured if men queſtion their honeſty and uprightneſs in the Faith: theſe men are notorious ſelf-deceivers, meer Hypocrites; and in plain truth, this is the very true deſcription by which damnable Hypocrites are known from ſound Chriſtians. The Lord open mens eyes to ſee it in time while it may be cured. Yea, and the nearer any true Chriſtian doth come to this ſin, the more doth he diſoblige God, and quench the Spirit of Comfort, and darken his own Evidences, and deſtroy his Peace of Conſcience, and create unavoidable Troubles to his Spirit, and eſtrangedneſs betwixt the Lord Jeſus and his own ſoul. Avoid this therefore, if ever you have will Peace.

DIRE-

DIRECTION. XXV.

25. My next advice ſhall be ſomewhat near of kin to the former. If you would learn the moſt expeditious way to Peace and ſettled Comfort, [*Study well the Art of Doing Good: and let it be your every daies contrivance, care and buſineſs, how you may lay out all that God hath truſted you with, to the greateſt pleaſing of God, and to your moſt comfortable account.*]

STill remember (leſt any Antinomian ſhould tell you that this favours of Popery, and truſting for Peace to our own Works.)

1. That you muſt not think of giving any of Chriſts Honour or Office to your beſt works. You muſt not dream that they can do any thing to the ſatisfaction of Gods Juſtice for your ſins: nor that they have any proper Merit in them, ſo as for their worth to oblige God to Reward you: nor that you muſt bring them as a Price to purchaſe Chriſt and Heaven: nor that you have any Righteouſneſs or Worthineſs in your ſelf and Works, which the Law of Works will ſo denominate or own. But only you muſt give Obedience its due under Chriſt; and ſo you honour Chriſt himſelf, when thoſe that detract from Obedience to him, do diſhonour him; and you muſt have an Evangelical *Worthineſs and Righteouſneſs* (ſo called many and many times over in the Goſpel) which partly conſiſteth in the ſincerity of your

your Obedience and Good Works; as the condition of continuing your ſtate of Juſtification, and right to Eternal Life.

2. Remember I have given you many Arguments before, to prove that you may take Comfort from your Good Works and Gracious Actions.

3. If any further Objections ſhould be made againſt this, read conſiderately and believingly, *Mat.* 25. and *Mat.* 5. & 7. Chapters throughout, or the former only; and I doubt not but you will be fully reſolved. But to the work.

Thoſe men that ſtudy no other Obedience than only to do no (poſitive) harm, are ſo far from true Comfort, that they have yet no true Chriſtianity; I mean, ſuch as will be ſaving to them. *Doing Good* is an high part of a Chriſtians obedience, and muſt be the chief part of his life. The Heathen could tell him that askt him, How men might be like to God? That one way was, *To do good to all*, That is beyond our power, being proper to God the Univerſal Good, whoſe Mercy is over all his Works. But our Goodneſs muſt be Communicative, if we will be like God, and it muſt be extended and diffuſed as far as we can. The Apoſtles charge is plain, and we muſt obey it if we will have any Peace, *Gal.* 6. 10. *While you have time, Do good to all men, but eſpecially to them of the houſhold of faith.* Iſa. 1. 16, 17. *Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgement, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the Widdow: Come now and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord; though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like Crimſon, they ſhall be as wooll.*] Heb. 13. 16. *To Do Good, and to communicate, forget not; for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed.*] 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that be rich in this world, that*

they

they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: That they Do Good, that they be rich in Good Works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.] See *Luke* 6. 33, 34, 35. *Mark* 14. 7. *Matth.* 5. 44. 1 *Pet.* 3. 11. *James* 4. 17. *Pſal.* 34. 14. & 37. 27. & 36. 3. & 37. 3. *Truſt in the Lord, and Do Good.*] Gen. 4. 7. *If thou Do Well, ſhalt thou not be Accepted? but if thou do Evil, ſin lyeth at the door.*] Act. 10. 3, 4, 34, 35. Cornelius, *thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a Memorial before God.*] 35. [*In every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is Accepted of him.*] Rom. 6. 16. *Know you not that to whom ye yield your ſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey? whether of ſin unto death, or of Obedience unto Righteouſneſs?*] 13. *Yield your ſelves unto God as thoſe that are alive from the dead, and your members as Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs unto God.*] Mat. 5. 16. Act. 9. 36. Eph. 2. 10. *We are created in Chriſt Jeſus to Good Works, which God hath ordained that we ſhould walk in them.*] 1 Tim. 2. 10. & 5. 10. & 5. 25. 2 Tim. 3. 17. Tit. 2. 7. & 3. 8, 14. & 2. 14. *He redeemed us from all iniquity, that he might purifie to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of Good Works.*] 1 Pet. 2. 12. Heb. 10. 24. *Let us conſider one another, to Provoke to Love, and to Good Works.* What a multitude of ſuch paſſages may you find in Scripture?

You ſee then how great a part of your Calling and Religion conſiſteth in *Doing Good.* Now it is not enough to make this your care now and then, or do Good when it falls in your way; but you muſt *ſtudy* it, or it will not be done well. You muſt ſtudy

which

which are Good Works; and which are they that you are called to: and which are the beſt Works, and to be preferred, that you chuſe not a leſs inſtead of a greater. *God looks to be ſerved with the beſt.* You muſt ſtudy for *opportunities* of Doing Good, and of the means of ſucceeding and accompliſhing it; and for the removing of Impediments; and for the overcoming of diſſwaſives, and withdrawing Temptations. You muſt know what Talents God hath entruſted you with, and thoſe you muſt ſtudy to do Good with: Whether it be Time, or Intereſt in men, or Opportunity, or Riches, or Credit, or Authority, or Gifts of mind, or of body: If you have not one, you have another, and ſome have all.

This therefore is the thing that I would perſwade you to: Take your ſelf for Gods Steward: Remember the time when it will be ſaid to you [*Give account of thy Stewardſhip; thou ſhalt be no longer Steward.*] Let it be your every daies contrivance, how to lay out your Gifts, Time, Strength, Riches or Intereſt, to your Maſters uſe. Think which way you may do moſt, firſt, to Promote the Goſpel, and the Publick Good of the Church: and then, which way you may help towards the ſaving of particular mens ſouls; and then which way you may better the Common-wealth, and how you may do good to mens bodies; beginning with your own, and thoſe of your family, but extending your help as much further as you are able. Ask your ſelf every morning, Which way may I this day moſt further my Maſters buſineſs, and the Good of men? Ask your ſelf every night, What Good have I done to day? And labour as much as may be, to be Inſtruments of ſome great and ſtanding Good, and of ſome Pub-

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lick and Univerſal Good; that you may look behind you at the years end, and at your lives end, and ſee the Good that you have done. A piece of bread is ſoon eaten, and a penny or a ſhilling is ſoon ſpent: But if you could win a Soul to God from ſin, that would be a viſible everlaſting Good: If you could be Inſtruments of ſetting up a Godly Miniſter in a Congregation that want, the everlaſting Good of many Souls might in part be aſcribed to you: If you could help to heal and unite a Divided Church, you might more rejoyce to look back on the fruits of your labour, than any Phyſician may Rejoyce to ſee his poor Patient recovered to health. I have told Rich men in another Book, what opportunities they have to do Good, if they had hearts: How eaſie were it with them to refreſh mens bodies, and to do very much for the ſaving ſouls! To relieve the poor; to ſet their Children to Trades; to eaſe the oppreſſed. How eaſie to maintain two or three poor Scholars at the Univerſities for the ſervice of the Church? But I hear but a few that do ever the more in it, except three or four of my friends in theſe parts. Let me further tell you, God doth not leave it to them as an indifferent thing, *Mat.* 25. They muſt feed Chriſt in the poor, or elſo ſtarve in Hell themſelves: They muſt cloath naked Chriſt in the poor, or be laid naked to his fiery indignation for ever. How much more diligently then muſt they help mens ſouls, and the Church of Chriſt, as the need is greater, and the work better; Oh the blinding power of Riches! Oh the eaſineſs of mans heart to be deluded! Do Rich men never think to lye rotting in the duſt? do they never think that they muſt be accountable for all their Riches; and for all their Time, and Power, and Intereſts; Do they not know

know that it will comfort them more at Death and Judgement, to hear in their reckoning, *Item* so much given to such and such Poor? so much to promote the Gospel? so much to maintain poor Scholars while they study to prepare themselves for the Ministry? &c. Than to hear, So much in such a Feast: to entertain such Gallants: to please such Noble friends: so much at Dice, at Cards, at Horse-races, at Cock-fights: so much in excess of Apparel: and the rest to leave my posterity in the like pomp: Do they not know that it will comfort them more to hear then of their time spent in Reading Scripture, secret and open Prayer, Instructing and examining their Children and Servants; going to their poor Neighbours houses to see what they want, and to perswade them to godliness; and in being examples of eminent holiness to all; and in suppressing Vice, and doing Justice; than to hear of so much time spent in Vain Recreations, Visits, Luxuries and Idleness? O deep unbelief and hardness of heart, that makes Gentlemen tha they tremble not to think of this Reckoning! Well, let me tell both them and all men, that if they knew but either that undispensable duty of Doing Good, that lieth on them, or how necessary and sure a way (in subordination to Christ) this act of Doing Good is for the souls Peace and consolation, they would study it better, and practise it more faithfully than now they do: They would then be glad of an opportunity to do Good, for their own Gain, as well as for Gods honour, and for the love of Good it self. They would know that lending to the Lord is the only thriving Usury; and that no part of all their Time, Riches, Interest in men, Power or Honours will be then comfortable to them, but that which was laid out for God; And they will

one day find, that God will not take up with the ſcraps of their Time and Riches which their fleſh can ſpare; but he will be firſt ſerved, even before all comers, and that with the beſt, or he will take them for no ſervants of his. This is true, and you'l find it ſo, whether you will now believe it or no.

And becauſe it is poſſible theſe lines may fall into the hands of ſome of the Rulers of this Commonwealth, let me here mind them of two weighty things:

1. What opportunities of Doing very great Good hath been long in their hands, and how great an account of it they have to make. It hath been long in their power to have done much to the Reconciling of our differences, and healing our Diviſions, by ſetting Divines a work of different Judgements to find out a temperament for Accommodation. It hath long been in their power to have done much towards the ſupply of all the dark Congregations in *England* and *Wales*, with competently able, ſound and faithful Teachers! We have many Congregations that do contain three thouſand, five thouſand, or ten thouſand ſouls, that have but one or two Miniſters, that cannot poſſibly do the tenth part of the Miniſterial work of Private over-ſight; and ſo poor ſouls muſt be neglected, let Miniſters be never ſo able or painfull: We have divers Godly Private Chriſtians of ſo much underſtanding as to be capable of helping us as Officers in our Churches: but they are all ſo poor that they are not able to ſpare one hour in a day or two from their labour, much leſs to give up themſelves to the work: How many a Congregation is in the ſame Caſe? Nothing almoſt is wanting to us to have ſet our Congregations in the order of Chriſt, and done this great work of Reformation which

there

there is so much talking of, so much as want of Maintenance for a Competent Number of Ministers or Elders to attend the work. I am sure in great Congregations this is the Case, and a sore that no other means will remedy. Was it never in the power of our Rulers to have helpt us here? Was nothing sold for other uses, that was once Devoted and Dedicated to God, and might have helpt us in this our miserable distress? Were our Churches able to maintain their own Officers, our Case were more tolerable; but when a Congregation that wants six, or seven, or ten, is not able to maintain one, it is hard.

2. The second thing that I would mind our Rulers of, is, What mortal Enemies those men are to their souls, that would perswade them that they must not, as Rulers, Do Good to the souls of men, and to the Church as such; nor further the Reformation, nor propagate the Gospel, nor stablish Christs orders in the Churches of their Country, any otherwise than by a common maintaining the Peace and Liberties of all. What doctrine could more desperately undo you if entertained? If you be once perswaded that it belongs not to you to *Do Good*, and the Greatest Good, to which all your successes have but made way, then all the Comfort, the blessing and Reward is lost: And consequently all the Glorious preparative successes, as to you, are lost: If once you take your selves to have nothing to do as Rulers for Christ, you cannot promise your selves that Christ will have any thing to do for you as Rulers in a way of Mercy: This Mr. *Owen* hath lately told you in his Sermon, *Oct.* 13. *The God of Heaven forbid, that ever all the Devils in Hell, the Jesuites at* Rome, *or the seduced souls in* England, *should be able to perswade the Rulers of this Land, who are so deeply bound to God by*

by Vows, Mercies, Profeſſions, and high expences of treaſure and blood, to Reform his Church, and propagate his Goſpel; that now after all this it belongeth not to them, but they muſt as Rulers be no more for Chriſt then for Mahomet: But if ever it ſhould prove the ſad caſe of England *to have ſuch Rulers (which I ſtrongly hope will never be) if my Prognoſticks fail not, this will be their fate: the Lord Jeſus will forſake them, as they have forſaken him, and the Prayers of his Saints will be fully turned againſt them: and his Elect ſhall cry to him night and day, till he avenge them ſpeedily, by making theſe his enemies to lick the duſt, and daſhing them in pieces like a potters veſſel, becauſe they would not that he ſhould reign over them: And then they ſhall know whether Chriſt be not King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

Perhaps you may think I Digreſs from the matter in hand: But as long as I ſpeak but for my Lord Chriſt, and for *Doing Good*, I cannot think that I am quite out of my way. But to return nearer to thoſe for whoſe ſakes I chiefly write: This is that ſum of my advice: Study with all the underſtanding you have, how to do as much Good while you have time as poſſibly you can, and you ſhall find that (without any Popiſh or Phariſaical ſelf-confidence) to be the moſt excellent art for obtaining ſpiritual Peace, and a large meaſure of comfort from Chriſt.

To that end uſe ſeriouſly and daily to bethink your ſelf what way of expending your Time and Wealth, and all your Talents, will be moſt Comfortable for you to hear of, and review at Judgement? and take that as the way moſt comfortable now. Only conſult not with fleſh and blood: make not your fleſh of your counſel in this work: but take it for your enemy: expect its violent unwearied oppo-

ſition: But regard not any of its clamours or repineings: But know, as I ſaid before, that your trueſt ſpiritual comforts are a Prize that muſt be won upon the conqueſt of the fleſh. I will only add to this the words of bleſſed Dr. *Sibs* (a man that was no enemy to Free Grace, nor unjuſt Patron of mans Works) in his Preface to his *Souls Conflict*: *Chriſt is firſt a King of Righteouſneſs, and then of Peace: The Righteouſneſs that works by his Spirit brings a Peace of ſanctification: whereby though we are not freed from ſin, yet we are enabled to combat with it, and to get the victory over it. Some degree of Comfort follows every Good Action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influences iſſue from the Sun: Which is ſo true, that very Heathens upon the diſcharge of a good Conſcience, have found Comfort and Peace anſwerable: this is a Reward before our Reward.* Again, *In watchfulneſs and diligence we ſooner meet with Comfort, then in idle Complaining.* Again, Pag. 44, 45. *An unimployed life is a burthen to it ſelf. God is a pure act: always Working: always Doing: and the nearer our ſoul comes to God, the more it is in action, and the freer from diſquiet. Men experimentally feel that Comfort in Doing that which belongs unto them, which before they longed for, and went without.* And in his Preface to the *Bruiſed Reed*; *There is no more Comfort to be expected from Chriſt than there is Care to Pleaſe him. Otherwiſe to make him an Abetter of a lawleſs and a looſe life, is to transform him into a phanſie; nay into the likeneſs of him whoſe works he came to deſtroy, which is the moſt deteſtable Idolatry of all. One way whereby the Spirit of Chriſt prevaileth in his, is to preſerve them from ſuch thoughts: Yet we ſee People will frame a Divinity to themſelves, pleaſing to the fleſh, ſuitable to their own ends, which being vain*

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in the ſubſtance, will prove likewiſe vain in the fruit, and a building upon the ſands. So far Dr. *Sibs.* It ſeems there were Libertines and Antinomians then: and will be as long as there are any carnal, unſanctified Profeſſors.

DIRECTION XXVI.

16. Having led you thus far towards a ſetled Peace, my next Direction ſhall contain a Neceſſary Caution, leſt you run as far into the contrary extream, *viz.* [*Take heed that you neither trouble your own ſoul with needleſs ſcruples; about matters of doctrine, of duty, or of ſin, or about your own condition: Nor yet that you do not make your ſelf more work than God hath made you, by faining things unlawful which God hath not forbidden, or by placing your Religion in Will-worſhip, or in an over-curious inſiſting on Circumſtantials, or an over-rigorous dealing with your body.*]

THis is but the Expoſition of *Solomons, Be not overwiſe, and be not Righteous overmuch,* Eccleſ. 7.16. A man cannot ſerve God too much: formally and ſtrictly conſidering his ſervice: much leſs Love him too much. But we may do too much Materially intending thereby to ſerve God; which though it be not true Righteouſneſs, yet being Intended for

Righteouſneſs, and done as a ſervice of God, or Obedience to him, is here called Over-much-Righteouſneſs. I know it is ſtark madneſs in the Prophane ſecure World to think that the doing of no more than God hath commanded us, is Doing too much, or more than needs; as if God had bid us do more than needs, or had made ſuch Laws as few of the fooliſh Rulers on earth would make: This is plainly to Blaſpheme the Moſt High, by denying his Wiſdom and his Goodneſs, and his Juſt Government of the World: and to Blaſpheme his holy Laws, as if they were too ſtrict, preciſe, and made us more to do than needs: and to reproach his ſweet and holy ways, as if they were grievous, intolerable and unneceſſary. Much more is their Madneſs, in charging the Godly with being too Pure, and too Preciſe, and making too great a ſtir for Heaven, and that meerly for their Godlineſs and Obedience, when, alas, the beſt do fall ſo far ſhort of what Gods Word and the neceſſity of their own ſouls do require, that their Conſciences do more grievouſly accuſe them of Negligence, than the barking World doth of being too preciſe and diligent: And yet more mad are the World, to lay out ſo much Time, and Care, and Labour for Earthly Vanities, and to provide for their contemptible bodies for a little while, and in the mean time to think that Heaven and their Everlaſting Happineſs there, and the eſcaping of everlaſting damnation in Hell, are Matters not worth ſo much ado, but may be had with a few cold wiſhes, and that its but folly to do ſo much for it as the Godly do: That no Labour ſhould be thought too much for the World, the fleſh and the Devil, and every little is enough for God. And that theſe wretched ſouls are ſo blinded by their own luſts, and ſo bewitch'd

witched by the Devil into an utter Ignorance of their own hearts, that they verily think, and will ſtand in it, that for all this they Love God above all, and love Heavenly things better than Earthly, and therefore ſhall be ſaved.

But yet Extreams there are in the ſervice of God, which all wiſe Chriſtians muſt labour to avoid. It is a very great Queſtion among Divines, Whether the common Rule in Ethicks, *That Virtue is ever in the middle between two extreams*, be ſound, as to Chriſtian Virtues: *Ameſius* ſaith No. The caſe is not very hard, I think, to be reſolved, if you will but uſe theſe three Diſtinctions. 1. Between the Acts of the meer Rational faculties, Underſtanding and Will, called Elicite Acts; and the Acts of the Inferiour faculties of ſoul and body, called, Imperate Acts. 2. Between the Acts that are About the End immediately, and thoſe that are About the Means. 3. Between the Intenſion of an Act, and the Objective Extenſion, and Compariſon of Object with Object. And ſo I ſay: 1. The End (that is, God and Salvation) cannot be too fully Known, or too much Loved, with a pure Rational Love of Complacency, nor too much ſought by the Acts of the ſoul, as purely Rational: For the End being loved and ſought for it ſelf, and being of Infinite Goodneſs, muſt be loved and ſought without Meaſure or Limitation, it being Impoſſible here to exceed. *Prop.* 2. The means, while they are not miſapprehended, but taken as Means, and Materially well underſtood, cannot be too clearly diſcerned, nor too Rightly choſen, nor too Reſolutely proſecuted. *Prop.* 3. It is too poſſible to miſ-apprehend the Means, and to place them inſtead of the End, and ſo to Over-love them. *Prop.* 4. The Nature of all the Means con-

fifteth in a Middle or Mean betwixt two Extreams, materially: both which extreams are ſin: ſo that it is poſſible to over-do about all the Means, as to the Matter of them, and the extent of our acts. Though we cannot Love God too much, yet it is poſſible to Preach, Hear, Pray, Read, Meditate, Confer of Good too much: for one duty may ſhut out another; and a greater may be neglected by our over-doing in a leſſer: which was the Phariſees ſin in Sabbath-Reſting. 5. If we be never ſo right in the extenſion of our Acts, yet we may go too far in the intenſion of the Imperate Acts or paſſions of the ſoul, and that both on the Means and End: Though the pure Acts of Knowing or Willing cannot be too great towards God and Salvation, yet the Paſſions and Acts, commonly called Senſitive, may. A man may think on God not only too much (as to exclude other neceſſary thoughts) but too Intenſly: and Love and Deſire too Paſſionately: For there is a Degree of Thinking or Meditating, and of Paſſionate Love and Deſire, which the brain cannot bear, but it will cauſe Madneſs, and quite overthrow the uſe of Reaſon, by over-ſtretching the Organs, or by the extream turbulency of the agitated ſpirits. Yet I never knew the man, nor ever ſhall do I think, that was ever guilty of one of theſe exceſſes, that is, of Loving or Deſiring God ſo Paſſionately as to diſtract him. But I have often known weak-headed people (that be not able to order their thoughts) and many Melancholy People, Guilty of the other; that is, of thinking too much, and too ſeriouſly and intenſly on Good and Holy things, whereby they have overthrown their Reaſon and been diſtracted. And here I would give all ſuch weak-headed Melancholy perſons this warning, That whereas in my Book of *Reſt*,

I ſo

I ſo much preſs a conſtant courſe of Heavenly Meditation, I do intend it only for ſound heads, and not for the Melancholy, that have weak heads, and are unable to bear it. That may be their ſin, which to others is a very great duty: While they think to do that which they cannot do, they will but diſable themſelves for that which they can do. I would therefore adviſe thoſe Melancholy perſons whoſe minds are ſo troubled, and heads weakned, that they are in danger of overthrowing their Underſtandings (which uſually begins in multitudes of ſcruples, and reſtleſneſs of mind, and continual fears, and blaſphemous temptations: where it begins with theſe, diſtraction is at hand, if not prevented) that they forbear Meditation, as being no duty to them, though it be to others; and inſtead of it be the more in thoſe duties which they are fit for: eſpecially Conference with Judicious Chriſtians, and Chearful and Thankful acknowledgement of Gods Mercies. And thus have I ſhewed you, how far we may poſſibly exceed in Gods ſervice: Let me now a little apply it.

It hath ever been the Devils Policy to begin in perſwading men to Worldlineſs, Fleſh-pleaſing, Security and Preſumption and utter neglect of God and their ſouls, or at leaſt preferring their bodies and worldly things: and by this means he deſtroyeth the world. But where this will not take, but God awaketh men effectually, and caſteth out the ſleepy Devil, uſually he fills mens heads with needleſs ſcruples, and next ſetteth them on a Religion not commanded, and would make poor ſouls believe they do Nothing, if they do not more than God hath commanded them. When the Devil hath no other way eſt to deſtroy Religion and Godlineſs, he will pre-

tend to be Religious and Godly himself: and then he is alwayes over-religious and over-godly in his Materials. *All over-doing in Gods work is undoing*; and whoever you meet with that would Over-do, suspect him to be either a subtil destroying enemy, or one deluded by the destroyer. O what a Tragedy could I here shew you of the Devils acting! and what a Mysterie in the Hellish Art of Deceiving could I open to you! And shall I keep the Devils counsel? No, O that God would open the eyes of his poor desolate Churches at last to see it!

The Lord Jesus in Wisdom and tender Mercy, establisheth a Law of Grace, and Rule of Life, Pure and Perfect, but simple and plain; laying the Condition of mans salvation more in the Honesty of the Believing Heart, than in the strength of Wit, and subtilty of a Knowing Head. He comprized the Truths which were of Necessity to salvation in a Narrow room: So that the Christian Faith was a matter of great plainness and simplicity. As long as Christians were such and held to this, the Gospel rode in Triumph through the world, and an Omnipotency of the Spirit accompanied it, bearing down all before it. Princes and Scepters stoopt: subtil Philosophy was non-pluss; and all usefull Sciences came down, and acknowledged themselves Servants, and took their places, and were well contented to attend the pleasure of Christ; As Mr. *Herbert* saith in his *Church Militant*:

Religion thence fled into Greece, *where Arts*
Gave her the highest place in all mens hearts;
Learning was pos'd: Philosophy was set;
Sophisters taken in a Fishers Net.

Plato

Plato *and* Ariſtotle *were at a loſs,*
And wheel'd about again to ſpell Chriſts Croſs.
Prayers chas't Syllogiſms into their den,
And Ergo *was transform'd into* Amen.

The Serpent envying this Happineſs of the Church, hath no way to undo us, but by drawing us from our Chriſtian ſimplicity. By the occaſion of Hereticks quarrels and errours, the Serpent ſteps in, and will needs be a ſpirit of Zeal in the Church; and he will ſo Over-do againſt Hereticks, that he perſwads them, they muſt enlarge their Creed, and add this Clauſe againſt one, and that againſt another, and all was but for the perfecting and preſerving of the Chriſtian Faith: And ſo he brings it to be a Matter of ſo much Wit to be a Chriſtian (as *Eraſmus* complains) that ordinary heads were not able to reach it. He had got them with a Religious zealous Cruelty to their own and others ſouls, to lay all their Salvation, and the Peace of the Church upon ſome unſearchable myſteries about the Trinity, which God either never revealed, or never clearly revealed, or never laid ſo great a ſtreſs upon: Yet he perſwades them, that there was Scripture-proof enough for theſe: Only the Scripture ſpoke it but in the premiſes, or in darker terms, and they muſt but gather into their Creed the Conſequences, and put it into plainer expreſſions which Hereticks might not ſo eaſily corrupt, pervert or evade. Was not this Reverend Zeal? and was not the Devil ſeemingly now a Chriſtian of the moſt judicious and forward ſort? but what got he at this one game? 1. He neceſſitated Implicite Faith even in fundamentals, when he had got points beyond a vulgar reach among Fundamentals. 2. He neceſſitated ſome living Judge

for

for the Determining of Fundamentals *quoad nos*, though not *in se* (the Soul of Popish wickedness) that is, what it is in sense that the People must take for Fundamentals. 3. He got a standing Verdict against the perfection and sufficiency of Scripture (and consequently against Christ, his Spirit, his Apostles, and the Christian Faith:) That it will not afford us so much as a Creed or Systeme of Fundamentals, or Points absolutely Necessary to Salvation and Brotherly communion, in fit or tolerable phrases; but we must mend the language at least. 4. He opened a gap for humane Additions, at which he might afterwards bring in more at his pleasure. 5. He framed an Engine for an Infallible Division, and to tear in Pieces the Church, Casting out all as Hereticks that could not subscribe to his Additions, and necessitating separation by all dissenters, to the worlds End, till the Devils engine be overthrown. 6. And hereby he lays a ground upon the Divisions of Christians, to bring men into doubt of all Religion, as not knowing which is the right. 7. And he lays the ground of certain heart-burnings, and mutual Hatred, Contentions, Revilings, and Enmity. Is not here enough got at one Cast? Doth there need any more to the establishing of the Romish and Hellish darkness? Did not this one act found the Seat of *Rome?* Did not the Devil get more in his Gown in a day, than he could get by his Sword in three hundred years? And yet the Holy Ghost gave them full warning of this before-hand, 2 *Cor.* 11. 2, 3. *For I am Jealous over you with a godly Jealousie; for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chast Virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity*

that

that is in Christ. Rom. 14. 1. *Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye: but not to Doubtful Disputations.* Psal. 19. *The Law of the Lord is perfect.* 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration from God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all Goods Works.* Isa. 8. 20. *To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no truth in them.* With many the like.

This plot the Serpent hath found so successfull, that he hath followed it on to this day. He hath made it the great Engine to get *Rome* on his side, and to make them the great Dividers of Christs Church: He made the Pope and the Council of *Trent* believe, that when they had owned the antient Creed of the Church, they must put in as many and more additional Articles of their own, and Anathematize all gainsayers; and these Additions must be the peculiar Mark of their Church as Romish: and then all that are not of that Church, that is, that own not those super-added Points, are not of the true Church of Christ, if they must be Judges. Yea among our selves hath the devil used successfully this Plot; What Confession of the purest Church hath not some more than is in Scripture? The most modest must mend the phrase and speak plainer, and somewhat of their own in it; not excepting our own most reformed Confession.

Yea and where Modesty restrains men from putting all such inventions and explications in their Creed, the Devil perswades men that they being the Judgements of Godly Reverend Divines (no doubt to be Reverenced, valued and heard) it is almost as much

much as if it were in the Creed, and therefore whoever dissenteth must be noted with a black coal, and you must disgrace him, and avoid Communion with him as an Heretick. Hence lately is your Union, Communion and the Churches Peace laid upon certain unsearchable Mysteries about Predestination, the order and objects of Gods Decrees, the manner of the Spirits secretest operations on the soul, the Nature of the Wills essential Liberty, and its power of self-determining the Divine concourse, determination or predestination of mans, and all other Creatures actions, *&c.* That he is scarcely to be accounted a fit member for our fraternal Communion that differs from us herein. Had it not been for this one Plot, the Christian Faith hath been kept pure; Religion had been one; the Church had been one; and the hearts of Christians had been more one than they are. Had not the Devil turn'd Orthodox, he had not made so many true Christians Hereticks, as *Epiphanius* and *Austin* have enrolled in the black List: Had not the enemy of Truth and Peace got into the Chair, and made so pathetique an Oration as to inflame the minds of the Lovers of truth to be over-zealous for it, and to do too much, we might have had Truth and Peace to this day. Yea still, if he see any man of Experience and Moderation stand up to reduce men to the ancient simplicity, he presently seems the most zealous for Christ, and tells the unexperienced Leaders of the flocks, that it is in favour of some Heresie that such a man speaks; he is plotting a Carnal Syncretism, and attempting the reconcilement of Christ and *Belial*; he is tainted with Popery, or Socinianism, or Arminianism, or Calvinism, or whatsoever may make him odious with those he speaks to. O what the Devil hath got by Over-doing!

And

And as this is true in Doctrines, ſo is it in Worſhip and Diſcipline, and Paſtoral Authority, and Government. When the Serpent could not get the World to deſpiſe the poor Fiſhermen that publiſhed the Goſpel, (the Devil being Judged, and the World convinced by the Power of the Holy Ghoſt, the Agent, Advocate and Vicar of Chriſt on earth) he will then be the forwardeſt to honour and promote them: And if he cannot make *Conſtantine* a Perſecutor of them, he will perſwade him to raiſe them in worldly glory to the Stars, and make them Lords of *Rome*, and poſſeſs them with Princely Dignities and Revenues. And he hath got as much by over-honouring them, as ever he did by perſecuting and deſpiſing them. And now in *England*, when this plot is deſcryed, and we had taken down that ſuperfluous honour, as Antichriſtian, what doth the Devil but ſet in again on the other ſide? and none is ſo Zealous a Reformer as he. He cries down all as Antichriſtian, which he deſireth ſhould fall: Their Tithes and Maintenance are Antichriſtian and oppreſſive (O Pious Merciful Devil) down with them! Theſe Church-lands were given by Papiſts to Popiſh uſes, to maintain Biſhops, and Deans, and Chapters; down with them. Theſe Colledge-lands, theſe Cathedrals, nay theſe Church-houſes, or Temples (for ſo I'll call them, whether the Devil will or no) all come from Idolaters, and are abuſed to Idolatry: down with them. Nay think you but he hath taken the boldneſs to cry out, theſe Prieſts, theſe Miniſters, are all Antichriſtian, Seducers, Needleſs, Enviers of the ſpirit of propheſie, and of the Gifts of their Brethren, Monopolizers of Preaching: down with them too! So that though he yet have not what he would have, the old Serpent hath done more

more as a Reformer by over-doing, than he did in many a year as a Deformer or hinderer of Reformation: Yet if he do but see that there is a Soveraign Power that can do him a Mischief, he is ready to tell them, They must be Merciful, and not deal Cruelly with sinners! Nay it belongs not to them to reform, or to Judge who are Hereticks and who not, or to restrain false doctrine, or Church-disturbers. Christ is sufficient for this himself.] How oft hath the Devil preached thus, to tye the hands of those that might wound him?

Would you see any further how he hath played this successful game of *Over-doing?* Why, he hath done as much by it in Worship and Discipline, as almost in any thing: When he cannot have Discipline neglected, he is an over-zealous Spirit in the breasts of the Clergy; and he perswades them to appoint men Penance, and Pilgrimages, and to put the necks of Princes under their feet. But if this Tyranny must be abated, he cries down all Discipline, and tells them it is all but Tyranny and humane Inventions; And this confessing sin to Ministers for Relief of Conscience, and this open Confessing in the Congregation for a due manifestation of Repentance, and satisfaction to the Church, that they may hold Communion with them, it is all but Popery and Priestly Domineering.

And in matter of Worship, worst of all: When he could not perswade the world to persecute Christ, and to refuse him and his Worship, the Serpent will be the most zealous Worshipper, and saith, as *Herod*, and with the same mind, *Come and tell me, that I may worship him.* He perswades men to Do and Over-do: He sets them on laying out their Revenues in sumptuous Fabricks, in fighting to be Masters

of

of the Holy Land and Sepulcher of Chriſt; on going Pilgrimages, Worſhipping Saints, Angels, Shrines, Reliques, Adoring the very bread of the Sacrament as God, exceſſive Faſtings, choice of meats, numbred Prayers on beads, Repetitions of words, ſo many *Ave Maries*, *Pater Noſters*, the name Jeſus ſo oft Repeated in a breath, ſo many Holy-dayes to Saints, Canonical hours, even at midnight to pray, and that in Latine for greater reverence, Croſſings, holy garments, variety of preſcribed geſtures, kneeling and worſhipping before Images, ſacrificing Chriſt again to his Father in the Maſs; forſwearing Marriage; living retiredly as ſeparate from the world; multitudes of new preſcribed Rules and orders of life; vowing poverty; begging without need; creeping to the Croſs, Holy water, and Holy bread, carrying Palms, kneeling at Altars, bearing Candles, Aſhes; In Baptiſm, Croſſing, Conjuring out the Devil, ſalting, ſpittle, oyl; taking Pardons, Indulgencies and Diſpenſations of the Pope; praying for the Dead, Perambulations, ſerving God to Merit Heaven, or to eaſe ſouls in Purgatory; doing Works of ſupererogation, with multitudes the like: All theſe hath the Devil added to Gods Worſhip, ſo zealous a Worſhipper of Chriſt is he, when he takes that way. Read Mr. *Herberts Church Militant* of *Rome*, pag. 188, 189, 190. I could trace this Deceiver yet further, and tell you wherein, when he could not hinder Reformation in *Luthers* dayes, he would needs over-do in Reforming! But O how ſad an example of it have we before our eyes in *England*! Never people on earth more hot upon Reforming! Never any deeper engaged for it. The Devil could not hinder it by fire and ſword; when he ſees that, he will needs turn Reformer, as I ſaid before, and he

gets

gets the Word, and cries down Antichriſt, and cries up Reformation, till he hath done what we ſee! He hath made a *Babel* of our work, by confounding our languages; For though he will be for Reformation too, yet his name is *Legion*, he is an Enemy to the one God, one Mediator and Head, one Faith and one Baptiſm, one heart, and lip, and one way, Unity is the chief Butt that he ſhoots at. Is Baptiſm to be Reformed? Chriſt is ſo moderate a Reformer, that he only bids, Down with the Symbolical Myſtical Rite of mans vain addition. But the Serpent is a more Zealous Reformer: He ſaith, Out with expreſs Covenanting; Out with Children; They are a corruption of the Ordinance; and to others he ſayes, Our with Baptiſm it ſelf. We might follow him thus through other Ordinances. Indeed he ſo Over-does in his Reforming, that he would not leave us a Goſpel, a Miniſtry, a Magiſtracy to be for Chriſt, an Ordinance, no nor a Chriſt: (though yet he would ſeem to own a God, and the light of Nature.) All theſe with him are Antichriſtian.

By this time I hope you ſee that this way of Over-doing hath another Author than many zealous people do imagine: and that it is the Devils common ſucceſsful trade: ſo that his Agents in State-Aſſemblies are taught his Policy, *When you have no other way of un-doing, let it be by over-doing.* And the ſame way he takes with the ſouls of particular perſons: If he ſee them troubled for ſin, and he cannot keep them from the knowledge of Chriſt and free Grace, he puts the name of [*free Grace and Goſpel-preaching*] upon Antinomian and Libertine errours which ſubvert the very Goſpel and free Grace it ſelf. If he ſee men convinc't of this, and that

that it is neither common nor Religious Libertiniſm and ſenſuality that will bring men to Heaven, then he will labour to make Papiſts of them, and to ſet them on a task of external formalities, or macerateing their bodies with hurtful faſtings, watchings and cold, as if ſelf-murther were the higheſt pitch of Religion, and God had pleaſure to ſee his people Torment themſelves! I confeſs it is very few that ever I knew to have erred far in auſtere uſage of their bodies: But ſome I have; and eſpecially poor Melancholy Chriſtians that are more eaſily drawn to deal rigorouſly with their fleſh than others be. And ſuch Writings as lately have been publiſhed by ſome Engliſh Popiſh Formaliſts, I have known draw men into this ſnare. I would have all ſuch remember, 1. That God is a Spirit, and will be worſhipped in Spirit and in Truth: and ſuch Worſhippers doth he ſeek. 2. That God will have mercy and not ſacrifice; and that the Vitals of Religion are in a Conſumption when the heat of Zeal is drawn too much to the out-ſide; And that placing moſt in externals is the great character of Hypocriſie, and is that Phariſaical Religion to which the doctrine and practice of the Lord Jeſus was moſt oppoſite, as any that will read the Goſpel may ſoon ſee. 3. That God hath made our bodies to be his Servants, and Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs, *Rom.* 6.13. And helpful and ſerviceable to our ſouls in Well doing: And therefore it is Diſobedience, it is Injuſtice, it is Cruelty to diſable them, and cauſleſly to vex and torment them, much more to deſtroy them. You may ſee by ſick men, by Melancholy men, by Mad men and Children, how unfit that ſoul is to know, or love, or ſerve God, that hath not a fit body to work in and by. The Serpent knows this well

enough: If he can but get you by exceſſive faſtings, watchings, labours, ſtudies, or other auſterities, eſpecially ſadneſs and perplexities of mind, to have a ſick body, a crazed brain, or a ſhort life, you will be able to do him but little hurt, and God but little ſervice, beſides the pleaſure that he takes in your own vexation. Nay, he will hope to make a further advantage of your weakneſs, and to keep many a ſoul in the ſnares of ſenſuality, by telling them of your miſeries, and ſaying to them, *Doſt thou not ſee in ſuch a man or woman, what it is to be ſo holy and preciſe? They will all run mad at laſt: If once thou grow ſo ſtrict, and deny thy ſelf thy Pleaſures, and take this preciſe courſe, thou wilt but make thy life a miſery, and never have a merry day again.* Such examples as yours the Devil will make uſe of, that he may terrifie poor ſouls from Godlineſs, and repreſent the word and waies of Chriſt to them in an odious, and unpleaſing, and diſcouraging ſhape. Doubtleſs that God who himſelf is ſo Merciful to your Body, as well as to your Soul, would have you to be ſo too: He that provideth ſo plentifully for its refreſhment, would not have you refuſe his proviſion. He that ſaith the Righteous man is merciful to his beaſt, no doubt would not have him to be unmerciful to his own body. You are commanded to Love your Neighbours but as your ſelf: And therefore by cruelty and unmerciful dealing with your *own* body, you will go about to Juſtifie the like dealing with others. You durſt not deny to feed, to cloath, to comfort and refreſh the poor, leſt Chriſt ſhould ſay, *You did it not to me.* And how ſhould you dare to deny the ſame to your ſelf? How will you anſwer God for the neglect of all that ſervice which you ſhould have done him, and might, if you had not diſabled

diſabled your bodies and minds? He requireth that you Delight your ſelf in him: And how can you do that when you habituate both mind and body to a ſad, dejected, mournful garb? The ſervice that God requires, is, *To ſerve him with chearfulneſs in the abundance that we poſſeſs, Deut.* 28. 47. If you think that I here contradict what I ſaid in the former Directions, for pinching the fleſh, and denying its deſires, you are miſtaken: I only ſhew you the danger of the contrary extream. Gods way lieth between both. The truth is (if you would be reſolved how far you may pleaſe or diſpleaſe the fleſh) The fleſh being ordained to be our ſervant and Gods ſervant, muſt be uſed as a ſervant: You will give your ſervant food, and raiment, and wholſom lodging, and good uſage, or elſe you are unjuſt, and he will be unfit to do your work: But ſo far as he would Maſter you, or diſobey you, you will correct him, or keep him under. You will feed your horſe, or elſe he will not carry you: But if he grow unruly, you muſt tame him. It is a deluſory formality of Papiſts to tye all the Countries to one time and meaſure of faſting, as Lent, Fridaies, &c. When mens ſtates are ſo various that many (though not quite ſick) have more need of a reſtoring diet; and thoſe that need faſting, need it not all at once, nor in one meaſure, but at the time, and in the meaſure, as the taming of their fleſh requireth it. As if a Phyſician ſhould proclaim that all his Patients ſhould take Phyſick ſuch forty dai every year, whether their diſeaſe be plethorick [illegible] ſuming, from fulneſs or from abſtinence, and whether the diſeaſe take him at that time of the year or another. And remember that you muſt not under pretences of ſaving the body, diſable it to ſerve God. You will not lay any

ſuch correction on your Child or Servant as ſhall diſable them from their work, but ſuch as ſhall excite them to it. And underſtand that all your Afflicting your body muſt be either Preventive, as keeping the fire from the thatch, or Medicinal and Corrective, and not ſtrictly Vindictive: for that belongs to your Judge: Though in a ſuordination to the other ends, the ſmart or ſuffering for its fault, is one end, and ſo it is truly Penal or Vindictive, as all Chaſtiſement is: And ſo *Paul* ſaith, *Behold what Revenge, &c. 2 Cor. 7. 11.* But not as meer Judicial Revenge is. Remember therefore, though you muſt ſo far tame your body as to bring it into ſubjection, that you periſh not by pampering; yet not ſo far as to bring it to weakneſs, aud ſickneſs, and unfitneſs for its duty: Nor yet muſt you dare to conceit that you pleaſe God, or ſatisfie him for your ſin, by ſuch a wronging and hurting your own body. Such Popiſh Religiouſneſs ſhews that men have very low and carnal conceits of God. Was it not a baſe wickedneſs in them that offered their Children in ſacrifice, to think that God would be pleaſed with ſuch cruelty? Yea, were it not to have directed us to Chriſt, he would not have accepted of the blood of Bulls and Goats: It is not ſacrifice that he deſires: He never was blood thirſty, nor took any pleaſure in the Creatures ſuffering. How can you think then that he will take pleaſure in your conſuming and deſtroying your own bodies? It is as unreaſonable as to imagine that he delights to have men cut their own throats, or hang themſelves; for pining and conſuming ones ſelf, is ſelf-murther as well as that. Yet I know no man ſhould draw back from a painful or hazardous work when God calls him to it, for fear of deſtroying the fleſh: But do not make work or ſuffering for your

your ſelves. God will lay as much Affliction on you as you need; and be thankful if he will enable you to bear that: but you have no need to add more. If your ſelves make the ſuffering, how can you with any encouragement beg ſtrength of God to bear it? and if you have not ſtrength, what will you do? Nay, how can you pray for deliverance from Gods Afflictings, when you make more of your own? And thus I have ſhewed you the danger of Over-doing, and what hinderance it is to a ſettled Peace, both of Church (State) and Soul; though perhaps it may not condemn a particular Soul ſo certainly (in moſt parts of it) as doing too little will.

5. The next part of my Direction (firſt expreſt) is, that *You avoid cauſleſs ſcruples*, about doctrines, duties, ſins, or your own ſtate.

Theſe are alſo Engines of the Enemy to batter the Peace and Comfort of your Soul; he knows that it is chearfull Obedience, with a Confidence of Chriſts Merits and Mercies that God Accepteth: And therefore if he cannot hinder a poor ſoul from ſetting upon Duty, he will hinder him if he can by theſe ſcruples from a chearful and proſperous progreſs. Firſt, If he can, he will take in ſcruples about the Truth of his Religion, and ſhewing him the many opinions that are in the world, he will labour to bring the poor Chriſtian to a loſs. Or elſe he will aſſault him by the men of ſome particular Sect, to draw him to that party, and ſo by corrupting his Judgement to break his Peace: or at leaſt to trouble his head, and divert his thoughts from God, by tedious Diſputes. The Papiſts will tell him that they are the only true Catholick Church (as if they had got a Monopoly or Patent for Religion, and had confined Chriſt to themſelves) who are ſuch noto-

rious abuſers of him. And as if all the Churches of *Greece*, *Ethiopia*, and the reſt of the world were unchurcht by Chriſt, to humour Maſter Pope, though they be far more in Number, and many of them ſounder in doctrine than the Romaniſts are; Thoſe of other parties will do the like, each one to draw him to their own way. And the Devil would make him believe that there are as many Religions as there be odd Opinions: when, alas, the Chriſtian Religion is one, and but one, conſiſting, for the doctrinals, in thoſe fundamentals contained in our Creed: and mens leſſer erroneous opinions are but the ſcabs that adhere to their Religion: Only the Church of *Rome* is a very Leper, whoſe infectious diſeaſe doth compel us to avoid her company: (As for any ſort of men that deny the Fundamentals, I will not call them by the name of Chriſtians.) So alſo in Duties of Worſhip Satan will be caſting in Scruples. If they ſhould hear the Word, he will cauſe them to be ſcrupling the Calling of the Miniſter, or ſomething in his Doctrine, to diſcourage them. If they ſhould Dedicate their Children to Chriſt in the Baptiſmal Covenant, he will be raiſing ſcruples about the Lawfulneſs of Baptizing Infants; When they ſhould ſolace their ſouls at the Lords Supper, or other Communion of the Church, he will be raiſing ſcruples about the fitneſs of every one that they are to Joyn with, and whether it be lawful to Joyn with ſuch an Ignorant man, or ſuch a wicked man; or whether it be a true Church, or rightly gathered, or governed, or the Miniſter a true Miniſter, and twenty the like. When they ſhould Joyn with the Church in the ſinging of Gods Praiſes, he will move one to ſcruple ſinging *David's* Pſalms; another to ſcruple ſinging among the ungodly; another ſinging Pſalms

that

that agree not to every mans condition; another, because our tranſlation is bad, or our Meeter defective, and we might have better. When men ſhould ſpend the Lords Day in Gods Spiritual Worſhip, he cauſeth one to ſcruple whether the Lords Day be of Divine Inſtitution: another he drives into the other extream, to ſcruple almoſt every thing that is not worſhip; Whether they may provide their meat on that day (when yet it is a ſolemn day of thankſgiving, and they ſcruple not much more on other thankſgiving daies) or whether they may ſo much as move a ſtick out of the way; Others he moves to trouble themſelves with ſcruples, at what hour the day begins and ends, and the like: Whereas if they 1. Underſtood that worldly reſt is commanded but as a help to ſpiritual Worſhip. 2. And that they muſt imploy as much of that day in Gods work, as they do of other daies in their Callings, and reſt in the night as at other times, and that God looks to Time for the Works ſake, and not at the Work for the Time ſake; this would caſt out moſt of their ſcruples. The like courſe Satan takes with Chriſtians in Reading, Praying in ſecret, or in their families, Teaching their families, Reproving Sinners, Teaching the Ignorant, Meditation, and all other duties, too long to mention the particular ſcruples which he thruſts into mens heads, much more to Reſolve them, which would require a large Volume alone.

Now I would entreat all ſuch Chriſtians to conſider how little they Pleaſe God, and how much they Pleaſe Satan, and how much they break their own Peace, and the Peace of the Churches. If you ſend a man on a Journey, would you like him better that would ſtand queſtioning and ſcrupling every ſtep he goes, whether he ſet the right foot before? or whe-

ther he should go in the foot-path, or in the road? or him that would chearfully go on, not thinking which foot goeth forward; and rather step a little beside the path, and in again, than to stand scrupling when he should be going. If you send reapers into your harvest, which would you like better? Him that would stand scrupling how many straws he should cut down at once, and at what height; and with fears of cutting them too high or too low, too many at once, or too few, should do you but little work? Or him that would do his work chearfully, as well as he can? Would you not be angry at such childish unprofitable diligence or curiosity as is a hinderance to your work? And is it not so with our Master? There was but one of those parties in the right that *Paul* spoke to, *Rom.* 14. & 15. And yet he not only perswades them to bear with one another, and not to judge one another, but to receive the weak in faith, and not to doubtful disputations: but he bids them, Let every man be fully perswaded in his own mind. How? Can he that erreth be fully perswaded in his errour? Yes: He may go on boldly, and confidently, not troubling himself with demurs in his duty, as long as he took the safer side in his doubt. Not that this should encourage any to venture on sin, or to neglect a due enquiry after Gods mind. But I speak against tormenting scruples, which do no work, but hinder from it, and stay us from our duty.

The same I say against scruples about your sins: Satan will make you believe that every thing is a sin, that he may disquiet you, if he cannot get you to believe that nothing almost is sin, that he may destroy you. You shall not put a bit in your mouth, but he will move a scruple whether it were not too Good, or too much. You shall not cloath your self, but

but he will move you to ſcruple the lawfulneſs of it. You ſhall not come into any company, but he will afterward vex you about every word you ſpoke, leſt you ſinned.

The like I may ſay alſo about your condition: but more of that anon.

DIRECTION XXVII.

27. *When God hath once ſhewed you a Certainty, or but a ſtrong Probability of your Sincerity and his ſpecial Love: Labour to fix this ſo deep in your Apprehenſion and Memory, that it may ſerve for the time to come, and not only for the preſent: And leave not your ſoul too open to Changes upon every New Apprehenſion, nor to queſtion all that's paſt upon every jealouſie: Except when ſome Notable declining to the world and the fleſh, or a committing of Groſs ſins, or a wilfulneſs or careleſneſs in other ſins that you may avoid, do give you juſt Cauſe of queſtioning your Sincerity, and bringing your Soul again to the Bar, and your eſtate to a more exact review.*

SOme Antinomian Writers and Preachers you ſhall meet with, who will perſwade you, whatſoever ſins you fall into, never more to queſtion your Juſtification or Salvation. I have ſaid enough before to prove their doctrine deteſtible. Their reaſon

is,

is, Becauſe God changeth not as we change, and Juſtification is never loſt. To which I anſwer, 1. God hated us while we were workers of iniquity, *Pſal.* 11. 5. & 5. 5. And was angry with us when we were Children of wrath, *Epheſ.* 3. 1, 2, 3. And afterward he laid by that Hatred and Wrath: and all this without change. If we cannot reach to apprehend how Gods unchangeableneſs can ſtand with the fulleſt and frequenteſt expreſſions of him in Scripture, muſt we therefore deny what thoſe expreſſions do contain? as *Auſtin* ſaith, Shall we deny that which is plain, becauſe we cannot reach that which is obſcure and difficult? 2. But if theſe men had well ſtudied the Scriptures, they might have known that the ſame man that was Yeſterday hated as an Enemy, may to Day be Reconciled and loved as a Son, and that without any change in God; even as it falls out within the reach of our Knowledge: For God Ruleth the world by his Laws: They are his Moral Inſtruments: By them he Condemneth: By them he Juſtifieth; ſo far as he is ſaid in this Life, before the Judgement day, to do it (unleſs there be any other ſecret act of Juſtification with him, which man is not able now to underſtand.) The change is therefore in our Relations, and in the Moral Actions of the Laws. When we are Unbelievers and Impenitent, we are Related to God as Enemies, Rebels, Unjuſtified and Unpardoned: being ſuch as Gods Law Condemneth and pronounceth Enemies; and the Law of Grace doth not yet juſtifie or pardon; and ſo God is, as it were, in ſome ſenſe obliged according to that Law which we are under, to deal with us as Enemies, by deſtroying us; And this is Gods Hating, Wrath, &c. When we Repent, Return and Believe, our Relation is changed; The ſame Law that did condemn

demn us, is Relaxed and Disabled, and the Law of Grace doth now Acquit us; it Pardoneth us, it Justifieth us, and God by it: And so God is Reconciled to us, when we are such as according to his own Law of Grace, he is, as it were, Obliged to forgive and to do Good to, and to use as sons; Is not all this apparently without any change in God! Cannot he make a Law that shall change its Moral Action according to the change of the actions or inclinations of sinners? and this without any change in God? And so, If it should so be, that a Justified man should fall from God, from Christ, from sincere Faith or Obedience, the Law would condemn him again, and the Law of Grace would Justifie him no more (in that state) and all this without any change in God. 3. If this Antinomian Argument would prove any thing, it would prove Justification before, and so without Christs satisfaction, because there is no change in God. 4. The very point, *That no justified man shall ever fall from Christ*, is not so clear and fully revealed in Scripture, and past all doubt from the assault of Objections, as that a poor soul in such a Relapsed estate should venture his everlasting salvation wholly on this; supposing that he were Certain that he was once sincere. For my own part, I am perswaded that no Rooted Believer, that is Habitually and Groundedly Resolved for Christ, and hath crucified the flesh and the world (as all have that are throughly Christs) do ever fall quite away from him afterwards. But I dare not lay my salvation on this. And if I were no surer of my salvation, than I am of the truth of this my Judgement, to speak freely, my soul would be in a very sad condition. 5. But suppose it as certain and plain as any word in the Gospel, (that a Justified man is never quite Unjustified)

fied.) Yet as every new ſin brings a new obligation to puniſhment (or elſe they could not be pardoned, as needing no pardon) ſo muſt every ſin have its particular pardon, (and conſequently the ſinner a particular Juſtification from the Guilt of that ſin) beſides his firſt general pardon (and Juſtification;) (For to pardon ſin before it is committed, is to pardon ſin that is no ſin, which is a Contradiction, and Impoſſibility.) Now, though for daily unavoidable Infirmities, there be a pardon of Courſe, upon the Title of our Habitual Faith and Repentance; yet whether in caſe of Groſs ſin, or more notable Defection, this will prove a ſufficient Title to particular pardon, without the addition of actual Repentance; and what Caſe the ſinner is in till that actual Repentance and Faith, as I told you before, are ſo difficult queſtions (it being ordered by Gods great wiſdom that they ſhould be ſo) that it beſeems no wiſe man to venture his ſalvation on his own opinion in theſe. Nay, it's certain, that if Groſs ſinners having opportunity and knowledge of their ſins, Repent not, they ſhall periſh. And therefore I think, a Juſtified man hath great Reaſon upon ſuch falls to examine his particular Repentance, (as well as his former ſtate) and not to promiſe himſelf, or preſume upon a pardon without it. 6. And beſides all this, though both the Continuance of Faith, and non-interciſion of Juſtification be never ſo certain, yet when a mans obedience is ſo far overthrown, his former Evidences and Perſwaſions of his Juſtification will be uncertain to him. Though he have no Reaſon to think that God is changeable, or Juſtification will be loſt, yet he hath Reaſon enough to queſtion whether ever he were a true Believer, and ſo were ever Juſtified. For Faith worketh by Love: and they that Love Chriſt will

will keep his Commandments. Libertines and carnal men may talk their pleaſure: but when Satan maintains not their Peace, ſin will break it: and Dr. *Sibs* words will be found true, *Souls Conflict*, pag. 41, 42. *Though the main pillar of our Comfort be the free forgiveneſs of our ſins, yet if there be a neglect of growing in Holineſs, the ſoul will never be ſoundly quiet, becauſe it will be prone to queſtion the truth of Juſtification: and it is a proper for ſin to raiſe doubts and fears in the Conſcience, as for rotten fleſh and wood to breed worms: Where there is not a pure Conſcience, there is not a pacified Conſcience, &c.* Read the reſt.

Thus much I have been fain to promiſe, leſt my words for Conſolation ſhould occation ſecurity and deſolation. But now let me deſire you to peruſe the Direction, and practiſe it. If when God hath given you Aſſurance, or ſtrong probabilities of your ſincerity, you will make uſe of it but only for that preſent time, you will never then have a ſettled Peace in your ſoul: Beſides, the great wrong you do to God, by neceſſitating him to be ſo often renewing ſuch diſcoveries, and repeating the ſame words to you ſo often over. If your Child offend you, would you have him when he is pardoned no longer to believe it than you are telling it him? Should he be ſtill asking you over and over every day, *Father, am I forgiven, or no?* Should not one anſwer ſerve his turn? Will you not believe that your money is in your purſe or cheſt any longer than you are looking on it? Or that your corn is growing on your land, or your cattle in your grounds any longer than you are looking on them? By this Courſe a Rich man ſhould have no more content than a beggar, longer than he is looking on his money, or goods, or lands: and when he is looking on one, he ſhould again loſe the

Comfort

Comfort of all the reſt. What hath God given you a Memory for, but to lay up former apprehenſions, and diſcoveries, and experiences, and make uſe of them on all meet occaſions afterwards? Let me therefore perſwade you to this great and neceſſary work. When God hath onee reſolved your Doubts, and ſhewed you the truth of your Faith, Love or Obedience, Write it down, if you can, in your Book (as I have adviſed you in my Treatiſe of *Reſt*) *Such a day upon ſerious peruſal of my heart I found it thus and thus with my ſelf.* Or at leaſt, Write it deep in your Memory; And do not ſuffer any fancies, or fears, or light ſurmiſes to cauſe you to queſtion this again, as long as you fall not from the Obedience or Faith which you then diſcovered. Alas, mans Apprehenſion is a moſt mutable thing: If you leave your ſoul open to every new apprehenſion, you will never be ſettled: You may think two contrary things of your ſelf in an hour. You have not alwaies the ſame opportunity for right diſcerning, nor the ſame clearneſs of Apprehenſion, nor the ſame outward means to help you, nor the ſame inward Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt: When you have theſe therefore, make uſe of them, and fix your wavering ſoul, and take your Queſtion and Doubt as Reſolved, and do not tempt God, by calling him to new Anſwers again and again, as if he had given you no anſwer before. You will never want ſome occaſion of jealouſie and fears as long as you have Corruption in your heart, and ſin in your life, and a Tempter to be troubling you: But if you will ſuffer any ſuch wind to ſhake your Peace and Comforts, you will be alwaies ſhaking, and fluctuating as a wave of the Sea. And you muſt labour to apprehend not only the Uncomfortableneſs, but the Sinfulneſs alſo of this courſe. For though

the

the questioning your own sincerity on every small occasion be not near so great a sin, as the questioning of Gods Merciful Nature, or the truth of his Promise, or his Readiness to shew Mercy to the Penitent soul, or the Freeness and Fulness of the Covenant of Grace: yet even this is no contemptible sin. For 1. You are doing Satans work, in denying Gods Graces, and accusing your self falsly; and so pleasing the Devil in Disquieting your self. 2. You slander Gods Spirit as well as your own soul, in saying, He hath not renewed and sanctified you, when he hath. 3. This will necessitate you to further Unthankfulness: for who can be Thankful for a Mercy that thinks he never received it? 4. This will shut your mouth against all those Praises of God, and that Heavenly Joyful Commemoration of his great unspeakable Love to your soul, which should be the blessed work of your life. 5. This will much abate your Love to God, and your sense of the Love of Christ in dying for you, and all the rest of your Graces, while you are still questioning your Interest in Gods Love. 6. It will lay such a discouragement on your soul, as will both destroy the sweetness of all Duties to you (which is a great evil) and thereby make you backward to them, and heartless in them: You will have no mind of Praying, Meditation, or other duties, because all will seem dark to you, and you will think that every thing makes against you. 7. You rob all about you of that chearful encouraging example and perswasion which they should have from you, and by which you might win many souls to God: And contrarily you are a discouragement and hinderance to them. I could mention many more sinful aggravations of your denying Gods Graces in you on every small insufficient occasion; which me-

thinks

thinks ſhould make you be very tender of it, if not to avoid unneceſſary Trouble to your ſelf, yet at leaſt to avoid ſin againſt God.

And what I have ſaid of Evidences and Aſſurance, I would have you underſtand alſo of your Experiences. You muſt not make Uſe only at the preſent of your Experiences, but lay them up for the time to come. Nor muſt you tempt God ſo far as to expect new Experiences upon every new ſcruple or doubt of yours, as the *Iſraelites* expected New Miracles in the Wilderneſs, ſtill forgetting the Old. If a Scholar ſhould in his Studies forget all that he hath Read and Learned, and all the Reſolutions of his Doubts which in ſtudy he hath attained, and leave his Underſtanding ſtill as an unwritten Paper, as a Receptive of every Mutation and New Apprehenſion, and contrary Conceit, as if he had never ſtudied the Point before, he will make but a poor proficiency, and have but a fluctuated unſettled brain. A Scholar ſhould make all the ſtudies of his Life to compoſe one entire Image of Truth in his ſoul, as a Painter makes every line he draws to compoſe one entire picture of a man; and as a Weaver makes every thred to compoſe one Web: ſo ſhould you make all former Examinations, Diſcoveries, Evidences, and Experiences Compoſe one full Diſcovery of your Condition, that ſo you may have a ſettled Peace of ſoul: And ſee that you tye both Ends together; and neither look on your preſent troubled ſtate without your former, leſt you be unthankful, and unjuſtly diſcouraged; nor on your former ſtate without obſervance of your preſent frame of heart and life, leſt you deceive your ſelf, or grow ſecure. O that you could well obſerve this Direction! How much would it help you to eſcape extreams,

and

and Conduce to the ſetling of a well-grounded Peace, and at once to the well ordering of your whole Converſation!

DIRECTION XXVIII.

28. *Be very careful that you create not perplexities and terrours to your own ſoul, by raſh miſ-interpretations of any Paſſages either of Scripture, of Gods Providence, or of the Sermons or private ſpeeches of Miniſters: But Reſolve with Patience, yea with Gladneſs, to ſuffer Preachers to deal with their Congregations in the moſt ſearching, ſerious, and awakening manner: leſt your weakneſs ſhould be a wrong to the whole Aſſembly, and poſſibly the undoing of many a ſenſual, drowſie or obſtinate ſoul, who will not be convinced and awaked by a Comforting way of Preaching, or by any ſmoother or gentler means.*

HEre are three dangerous enemies to your Peace, which (for brevity) I warn you of together.

1. Raſh Miſ-interpretations and miſ-applications of Scripture. Some weak-headed troubled Chriſtians can ſcarce read a Chapter, or hear one read, but they'l find ſomething which they think doth condemn them. If they read of Gods Wrath and Judgement, they think it is meant againſt them. If they

read, *Our God is a consuming fire*, they think presently it's themselves that must be the Fuell: Whereas Justice and mercy have each their proper objects: The burning fire will not waste the Gold, nor is Water the Fuell of it: But combustible matter it will presently consume. An humble soul that lies prostrate at Christs feet, confessing its unworthiness, and bewailing its sinfulness, this is not the object of Revenging Justice: such a soul bringing Christs Merits, and pleading them with God, is so far from being the Fuel of this Consuming Fire, that he bringeth that water which will undoubtedly quench it. Yet this Scripture-expression of our God, may subdue carnal security even in the best, but not dismay them or discourage them in their hopes. Another reads in *Psal.* 50. *I will set thy sins in order before thee*; and he thinks, certainly God will deal thus by him, Not considering that God chargeth only their sins upon them that charge them not by true Repentance on themselves, and Accept not of Christ who hath Discharged them by his blood. It is the excusers, and mincers, and defenders of sin, that love not those that Reprove them and that will not avoid them, nor the occasions of them, that would not be Reformed, and will not be perswaded, in whose souls Iniquity hath Dominion, and that Delight in it, it is these on whom God Chargeth their sin: *For this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and men Love Darkness rather than Light: and come not to the Light, lest their deeds should be Reproved*, Joh. 3. 20, 21. But for the soul that trembleth at Gods Word, and Comes home to God with shame and sorrow, Resolving to return no more to wickedness, God is so far from Charging his sins upon him, that he never mentioneth them, as, I told you, is

evident

evident in the Caſe of the Prodigal. He makes not a poor ſinners burthen more heavy by hitting him in the teeth with his ſins, but makes it the Office of his Son to eaſe him by disburthening him.

Many more Texts might be named (and perhaps it would not be loſt labour) which Troubled Souls do miſ-underſtand and miſ-apply: but it would make this Writing tedious, which is already ſwell'd ſo far beyond my firſt intention.

2. The ſecond Enemy of your Peace here mentioned is, *Miſ-underſtanding and miſ-applying Paſſages of Providence.* Nothing more common with Troubled ſouls, than upon every new Croſs and Affliction that befalls them, preſently to think, God takes them for Hypocrites! and to queſtion their ſincerity! As if *David* and *Job* had not left them a full warning againſt this Temptation. Do you loſe your goods? ſo did *Job*. Do you loſe your Children? ſo did *Job*: and that in no very Comfortable way. Do you loſe your Health? ſo did *Job*. What if your godly friends ſhould come about you in this Caſe, and bend all their wits and ſpeeches to perſwade you that you are but an Hypocrite? as *Jobs* friends did by him? Would not this put you harder to it? Yet could *Job* reſolve, *I will not let go mine Integrity till I die.* I know Gods Chaſtiſements are all Paternal Puniſhments: and that Chriſtians ſhould ſearch and try their hearts and wayes at ſuch times; but not conclude that they are Graceleſs ever the more for being Afflicted, ſeeing *God chaſteneth every ſon whom he receiveth*, Heb. 12. 6, 7. And in ſearching after ſin it ſelf in your Afflictions, be ſure that you make the Word, and not your ſufferings, the Rule to diſcover how far you have ſinned; and let Afflictions only quicken you to try by the Word. How

many a Soul have I known that by mis-interpreting Providences, have in a blind Jealousie been turned quite from Truth and Duty, supposing it had been errour and sin? and all because of their Afflictions? As a foolish man in his sickness accuseth the last meat that he ate before he fell sick, though it might be the wholsomest that ever he ate, and the disease may have many Causes which he is Ignorant of. One man being sick, a busie seducing Papist comes to him (for it is their use to take such opportunities) and tells him, *It is Gods hand upon you for forsaking or straying from the Roman Catholick Church; and God hath sent this Affliction to bring you home: all your Ancestors lived and died in this Church, and so must you if ever you will be saved.* The poor Jealous affrighted sinner hearing this, and through his Ignorance being unable to answer him, thinks it is even true, and presently turns Papist. In the same manner do most other Sects. How many have the Antinomians and Anabaptists thus seduced? finding a poor silly woman (for it's most common with them) to be under sad doubts and distress of soul, one tells her, *It is Gods hand on you to convince you of errour, and to bring you to submit to the Ordinance of Baptism:* and upon this many have been Rebaptized, and put their foot into the snare which I have yet seen few escape and draw back from. Another comes and tells the troubled soul, *It is Legal Preaching, and looking at something in your self for Peace and Comfort, which hath brought you to this distress: As long as you follow these Legal Preachers, and read their Books, and look at any thing in your self, and seek Assurance from Marks within you, it will never be better with you. These Preachers understand not the nature of free Grace, nor ever tasted it themselves, and therefore they cannot Preach it, but despise it. You must know that Grace*

is so free that the Covenant hath no Condition: You must believe and not look after the Marks: and Believing is but to be perswaded that God is Reconciled to you, and hath forgiven you; for you are Justified before you were born, if you are one of the Elect, and can but Believe it; It is not any thing of your own by which you can be Justified: Nor is it any sin of yours that can unjustifie. It is the witness of the spirit only perswading you of your Justification and Adoption, that can give you Assurance; and fetching it from any thing in your self, is but a resting on your own Righteousness, and forsaking Christ. When the Antinomian hath but sung this Ignorant Charm to a poor Soul as Ignorant as himself, and prepared by terrours to entertain the impression, presently it (oft) takes, and the sinner without a wonder of Mercy is undone. This Doctrine which subverteth the very scope of the Gospel, being entertained, subverteth his Faith and Obedience: and usually the Libertism of his opinion is seen in his Liberty of Conscience, and Licentious practices: and his trouble of mind is cured, as a burning feaver, by *opium*, which gives him such a sleep that he never awaketh till he be in another world. Yet these errours are so gross, and so fully against the express Texts of Scripture, that if Ministers would condescendingly, lovingly and familiarly deal with them and do their duty, I should hope many well-meaning Souls might be recovered. Thus you see the danger of rash interpreting, and so mis-interpreting Providences. As such interpretations of prosperity and success delude not only the Mahometan world, and the Prophane world, but many that seemed Godly; so many such Interpretations of Adversity and Crosses do; especially if the Seducer be but kind and liberal to relieve them in their Adversity, he may do with many poor Souls almost what he please.

3. The third Enemy to your peace here mentioned, is, *Misinterpreting or misapplying the Passages of Preachers in their Sermons, Writings, or private Speeches.* A Minister cannot deal throughly or seriously with any sort of sinners, but some fearfull troubled souls apply all to themselves. I must intreat you to avoid this fault, or else you will turn Gods Ordinances, and the daily food of your souls into bitterness and wormwood, and all through your mistakes. I think there are few Ministers so preach, but you might perceive whom they mean, and they so difference as to tell you who they speak to. I confess it is a better sign of an honest heart, and self-judging conscience, to say, *He speaks now to me, this is my case*, than to say, *He speaks now to such or such a one, this is their case.* For it is the property of Hypocrites to have their eye most abroad; and in every duty to be minding most the faults of others: and you may much discern such in their prayers, in that they will fill their confessions most with other mens sins, and you may feel them all the while in the bosom of their neighbours, when you may even feel a sincere man speaking his own heart, and most opening his own bosom to God. But though self-applying, and self-searching be far the better sign, yet must not any wise Christian do it mistakingly; for that may breed abundance of very sad effects. For besides the aforesaid embittering of Gods Ordinances to you, and so discouraging you from them, do but consider what a grief and a snare you may prove to your Minister. A grief it must needs be to him who knows he should not make sad the soul of the innocent, to think that he cannot avoid it, without avoiding his duty. When God hath put two several Messages in our mouths, *Esa.* 3. 10, 11. *Say to the right-*

teous,

tum, it ſhall be well with him: and *ſay to the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him*; *He that believeth ſhall be ſaved*; *He that believeth not ſhall be damned*, and we ſpeak both; will you take that as ſpoken to you, which is ſpoken to the unbeliever and the wicked? Alas, how is it poſſible then for us to forbear troubling you? If you will put your head under every ſtroke that we give againſt ſin and ſinners, how can we help it if you ſmart? what a ſad caſe are we in, by ſuch miſapplications! We have but two Meſſages to deliver, and both are uſually loſt by miſapplications. The wicked ſaith, *I am the righteous, and therefore it ſhall go well with me*: the Righteous ſaith, *I am the wicked, and therefore it ſhall go ill with me*: The Unbeliever ſaith, *I am a Believer, and therefore am juſtified*; The Believer ſaith, *I am an Unbeliever, and therefore am condemned*: nay, it is not only the loſs of our preaching, but we oft do them much harm: for they are hardened that ſhould be humbled: and they are wounded more that ſhould be healed. A Miniſter now muſt needs tell them, who he means by the Believer, and who by the Unbeliever; who by the Righteous, and who by the wicked: and yet when he hath done it as accurately, and as cautelouſly as he can, miſapplying ſouls will wrong themſelves by it: ſo that becauſe people cannot ſee the diſtinguiſhing line, it therefore comes to paſs that few are comforted, but when Miniſters preach nothing elſe but comfort: and few humbled, but where Miniſters bend almoſt all their endeavours that way, that people can feel almoſt nothing elſe from him: But for him that equally would divide to each their portion, each one ſnatcheth up the part of another, and he oft miſſeth of profiting either; And yet this is the courſe that we muſt take.

And what a ſnare is this to us, as well as a grief? what if we ſhould be ſo moved with compaſſion of your troubles, as to fit almoſt all our Doctrine and Application to you? what a fearful guilt ſhould we draw upon our own ſouls!

Nay, what a ſnare may you thus prove to the greater part of the Congregation? Alas, we have ſeldom paſt one or two, of three troubled Conſciences in an Auditory (and perhaps ſome of their troubles be the fruit of ſuch wilfull ſinning, that they have more need of greater humbling yet) ſhould we now neglect all the reſt of theſe poor ſouls, to preach only to you? O how many an Ignorant hard-hearted ſinner comes before God every day! Shall we let ſuch go away as they came, without ever a blow to awaken them and ſtir their hearts! when alas, all that ever we can do is too little! when we preach you into tears and trembling, we preach them aſleep! Could we ſpeak ſwords, it would ſcarce make them feel, when you through miſ-application have gone home with anguiſh and fears; how few of all theſe have been pricked at the heart, and ſaid, *What ſhall we do to be ſaved?* Have you no Pity now on ſuch ſtupid ſouls as theſe? I fear this one diſtemper of yours, that you cannot bear this rowſing preaching, doth bewray another and greater ſin; look to it, I beſeech you; for I think I have ſpy'd out the cauſe of your trouble: Are you not your ſelf too great a ſtranger to poor ſtupid ſinners? and come not among them? or pity them not as you ſhould? and do not your duty for the ſaving of your ſouls? but think it belongs not to you but to others? Do you uſe to deal with ſervants and neighbours about you, and tell them of ſin and miſery, and the remedy, and ſeek to draw their hearts to Chriſt, and bring them to

duty?

duty? I doubt you do little in this: (And that is sad unmercifulness;) for if you did, truly you could not choose but find such miserable ignorance, such senselessness and blockishness, such hating reproof and unwillingness to be reformed, such love of this world, and slavery to the flesh, and so little savour of Christ, Grace, Heaven and the things of the Spirit, and especially such an unteachableness, intractableness (as thorns and briers) and so great a difficulty moving them an inch from what they are, that you would have been willing ever after to have *Ministers* preach more rousingly than they do, and you would be glad for their sakes when you heard that which might awake them and prick them to the heart. Yea, if you had tryed how hard a work it is to bring worldly formal Hypocrites to see their Hypocrisie, or to come over to Christ from the creature, and to be in good earnest in the business of their salvation, you would be glad to have Preachers search them to the quick, and ransack their hearts, and help them against their affected and obstinate self-delusions.

Besides, you should consider that their Case is far different from yours: Your disease is pain and trouble, they are stark dead: You have Gods favour and doubt of it, they are his enemies and never suspect it: You want comfort, and they want pardon and life, if your disease should never here be cured, it is but going more sadly to Heaven: But if they be not recovered by Regeneration, they must dye for ever in Hell: And should we not then pity them more than you? and study more for them? and preach more for them? and rather forget you in a Sermon than them? should you not wish us so to do? should we more regard the comforting of one,

than

then the saving of an hundred? Nay more, we should not only neglect them, but dangerously hurt them, if we should preach too much to the case of troubled souls: For you are not so apt to misapply passages of terrour, and to take their portion, as they are apt to apply to themselves such passages for comfort and take your portion to themselves.

I know some will say, that it is preaching Christ, and setting forth Gods Love that will win them best, and terrors do but make unwilling Hypocritical Professors. This makes me remember how I have heard some Preachers of the times blame their Brethren for not Preaching Christ to their people, when they Preached the danger of rejecting Christ, disobeying him, and resisting his Spirit. Do these men think that it is no preaching Christ, (when we have first many years told men the fulness of his satisfaction, the freeness and general extent of his Covenant or Promise, and the riches of his Grace, and the incomprehensibleness of his Glory, and the Truth of all) to tell them afterwards the danger of refusing, neglecting, and disobeying him? and of living after the flesh, and preferring the world before him? and serving Mammon, and falling off in persecution, and avoiding the cross, and yielding in Temptation, and quenching the Spirit, and declining from their first Love, and not improving their Talents, and not forgiving and loving their Brethren, yea and enemies? *&c.* Is none of this Gospel? nor preaching Christ? yea, is not Repentance it self (except despairing Repentance) proper to the Gospel, seeing the Law excludeth it, and all manner of hope. Blame me not, Reader, if I be zealous against these men, that not only know no better what preaching Christ is, but in their ignorance reproach their Brethren

thren for not preaching Christ, and withall condemn Christ himself, and all his Apostles? Do they think that Christ himself knew not what it was to preach Christ? or that he set us a pattern too low for our imitation? I desire them soberly to read *Mat.* 5. 6, 7, 10, 25. *Rom.* 8. 4. from the 1. ver. to the 14. *Rom.* 2. *Heb.* 2. & 4. & 5. & 10. And then tell me whether we preach as Christ and his Apostles did. But to the Objection: I Answer first, We do set forth Gods love, and the fulness of Christ, and the sufficiency of his death and satisfaction for all, and the freeness and extent of his offer and promise of mercy, and his readiness to welcome returning sinners: this we do first (mixing with this the discovery of their natural misery by sin, which must be first known) and next we shew them the danger of Rejecting Christ and his offer. 2. When we find men setled under the preaching of free Grace, in a base contempt or sleepy neglect of it, preferring the world and their carnal pleasures and ease before all the Glory of Heaven and Riches of Christ and Grace, is it not time for us to say, *How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?* Heb. 2. 3. *And of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy that treads under foot the blood of the Covenant?* Heb. 10. 26. When men grow careless and unbelieving, must we not say, *Take heed lest a promise being left of entering into his Rest, any of you should seem to come short of it?* Heb 4. 1. 3. Hath not Christ led us, commanded us and taught us this way? *Except ye Repent, ye shall all perish*, was his doctrine, *Luk.* 13. 3, 5. *Go into the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature:* (what's that Gospel?) *He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned*, Mark 16. 16. *Those mine Enemies that would not I should raign over them, bring hither and slay them before me*, Luk. 19. 27.

Doth

Doth any of the Apoſtles ſpeak more of hell fire, and the worm that never dyeth, and the fire that never is quenched, than Chriſt himſelf doth? And do not his Apoſtles go the ſame way? even *Paul*, the greateſt Preacher of faith, 2 *Theſſ.* 1. 7, 8, 9. and 2. 12. *&c.* What more common? Alas, what work ſhould we make, if we ſhould ſtroak and ſmooth all men with Antinomian language? It were the way to pleaſe all the ſenſual prophane multitude; but it is none of Chriſts way to ſave their ſouls. I am ready to think that theſe men would have Chriſt preached, as the Papiſts would have him pray'd to; to ſay, *Jeſu, Jeſu, Jeſu,* nine times together, and this oft over, is their praying to him; and to have Chriſts name oft in the Preachers mouth, ſome men think is the right preaching Chriſt.

Let me now deſire you hereafter, to be glad to hear Miniſters awaken the prophane and dead-hearted hearers, and ſearch all to the quick, and miſapply nothing to your ſelf: but if you think any paſſage doth neerly concern you, open your mind to the Miniſter privately, when he may ſatisfie you more fully, and that without doing hurt to others: And conſider what a ſtrait Miniſters are in that have ſo many of ſo different conditions, inclinations, and converſations to preach to.

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DIRECTION XXIX.

29. *Be ſure you forget not to diſtinguiſh between Cauſes of Doubting of your ſincerity, and cauſes of meer Humiliation, Repentance and Amendment: And do not raiſe Doubtings and Fears, where God calleth you but to Humiliation, Amendment, and freſh recourſe to Chriſt.*

THis Rule is of ſo great moment to your peace, that you will have daily uſe for it, and can never maintain any true ſetled peace without the practice of it. What more common then for poor Chriſtians to pour out a multitude of complaints of their weakneſſes, and wants, and miſcarriages; and never conſider all the while that there may be cauſe of ſorrow in theſe, when yet there is no cauſe of doubting of their ſincerity. I have ſhewed before, that in groſs falls and great backſlidings, Doubtings will ariſe, and ſometime our fears and jealouſies may not be without cauſe; But it is not ordinary infirmities, nor every ſin which might have been avoided, that is juſt cauſe of Doubting. Nay, your very humiliation muſt no further be endeavoured than it tends to your Recovery, and to the honouring of mercy: For it is poſſible that you may exceed in the meaſure of your Griefs. You muſt therefore firſt be reſolved wherein the Truth of ſaving Grace doth conſiſt, and then in all your failings and weakneſſes firſt know, whether they contradict ſincerity it ſelf, and are ſuch

such as may give just cause to question your sincerity: If they be not (as the ordinary infirmities of Believers are not) then you may and must be humbled for them, but you may not doubt of your Salvation for them. I told you before, by what marks you may discern your sincerity, that is, wherein the nature of saving faith and holiness doth consist: Keep that in your eye: and as long as you find that sure and clear, let nothing make you doubt of your Right to Christ and Glory. But, alas, how people do contradict the will of God in this! when you have sinned, God would have you bewail your folly and unkind dealing, and flye to mercy through Christ: and this you will not do: But he would not have you torment your self with fears of Damnation, and questioning his Love: and yet this you will do. You may discern by this that Humiliation and Reformation are sure of God, mans heart is so backward to it; and that vexations, doubts and fears in true Christians that should be comfortable are not of God, mans nature is so prone to them (though the ungodly that should fear and doubt are as backward to it.)

I think it will not be unseasonable here to lay down the particular Doubts that usually trouble sincere Believers, and see how far they may be just, and how far unjust and causless; and most of them shall be from my own former experience; and such as I have been most troubled with my self, and the rest such as are incident to true Christians, and too usual with them.

DOUBT.

DOUBT. I.

I Have oft heard and read in the best Divines, that Grace is not born with us, and therefore Satan hath always possession before Christ, and keeps that possession in Peace, till Christ come and bind him and cast him out; and that this is so great a work that it cannot choose but be observed, and for ever remembred by the soul where it is wrought; yea, the several steps and passages of it may be all observed: first casting down, and then lifting up; first wounding and killing, and then healing and reviving. But I have not observed the distinct parts and passages of this change in me, nay, I know of no such sudden observable change at all: I cannot remember that ever I was first killed, and then revived: Nor do I know by what Minister, nor at what Sermon, or other means that work which is upon me was wrought? No nor what day or month or year it was begun. I have slided insensibly into a Profession of Religion, I know not how: And therefore I fear that I am not sincere, and the work of true Regeneration was never yet wrought upon my Soul.

ANSWER.

I Will lay down the full answer to this in these Propositions. 1. It is true that Grace is not Natural to us, or conveyed by Generation. 2. Yet it is as true that Grace is given to our Children as well as to us. That it may be so, and is so with some, all will grant who believe that Infants may be, and are saved: And that it is so with the Infants of Believers,

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I have fully proved in my Book of Baptism: But mark what Grace I mean: The Grace of Remission of original sin the Children of all true Believers have at least a high probability of, if not a full Certainty; their Parent Accepting it for himself and them, and Dedicating them to Christ, and engaging them in his Covenant, so that he takes them for his People, and they take him for their Lord and Saviour. And for the Grace of inward Renewing of their Natures or Disposition, it is a secret to us, utterly unknown whether God use to do it in Infants or no. 3. Gods first-ordained way for the working of inward holiness is by Parents Education of their Children, and not by the publick Ministry of the Word: of which more anon. 4. All godly Parents do acquaint their Children with the doctrine of Christ in their Infancy, as soon as they are capable of receiving it, and do afterwards inculcate it on them more and more. 5. These Instructions of Parents are usually seconded by the workings of the Spirit, according to the capacity of the Child, opening their understandings to receive it, and making an impression thereby upon the heart. 6. When these Instructions and the inward workings of the Spirit are just past the preparatory part, and above the highest step of Common Grace, and have attained to special saving Grace, inordinarily undiscernable: and therefore, as I have shewed already, in Gods usual way of working Grace, men cannot know the just day or time when they began to be in the state of Grace. And though men that have long lived in Prophaneness, and are changed suddenly, may conjecture neer at the time: yet those that God hath been working on early in their youth, yea or afterwards by slow degrees, cannot know the time of their first receiving the Spirit.

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8. The Memories of all men are ſo ſlippery, and one thought ſo ſuddenly thruſt out by another, that many a thouſand ſouls forget thoſe particular workings which they have truly felt. 9. The Memories of Children are far weaker than of others: and therefore it is leſs probable that all the Spirits workings ſhould by them be remembred. 9. And the motions of Grace are ſo various, ſometimes ſtirring one Affection, and ſometimes another; ſometimes beginning with ſmaller motions, and then moving more ſtrongly and ſenſibly, that it's uſual for later motions which are more deeply affecting, to make us over-look all the former, or take them for nothing. 10. God dealeth very variouſly with his Choſen in their Converſion, as to the accidentals and circumſtantials of the work. Some he calleth not home till they have run a long race in the way of Rebellion, in open drunkenneſs, ſwearing, worldlineſs, and deriſion of holineſs: Theſe he uſually humbleth more deeply, and they can better obſerve the ſeveral ſteps of the Spirit in the work; (and yet not alwaies neither.) Others he ſo reſtraineth in their youth, that though they have not ſaving Grace, yet they are not guilty of any Groſs ſins, but have a liking to the people and waies of God: And yet he doth not ſavingly convert them till long after. It is much harder for theſe to diſcern the time or manner of their Converſion: yet uſually ſome conjectures they may make: And uſually their humiliation is not ſo deep. Others, as is ſaid, have the ſaving workings of the Spirit in their very Childhood, and theſe can leaſt of all diſcern the certain time or order. The ordinary way of Gods dealing with thoſe that are Children of godly Parents, and have good Education, is, by giving them ſome liking of godly per-

ſons and waies, ſome Conſcience of ſin, ſome Repentance and recourſe by prayer to God in Chriſt for mercy, yet youthful luſts and folly, and ill company, do uſually much ſtifle it: till at laſt by ſome Affliction, or Sermon, or Book, or good Company, God ſetteth home the work, and maketh them more Reſolute and Victorious Chriſtians. Theſe perſons now can remember that they had convictions and ſtirrings of Conſcience when they were young, and the other fore-mentioned works: perhaps they can remember ſome more notable rowſings and awakenings long after, and perhaps they have had many ſuch fits and ſteps, and the work hath ſtood at this paſs for a long time, even many years together. But at which of all theſe Changes it was that the ſoul began to be ſavingly ſincere, I think is next to an impoſſibility to diſcern. According to that experience which I have had of the ſtate of Chriſtians, I am forced to Judge that moſt of the Children of the Godly that ever are Renewed, are Renewed in their Childhood, or much towards it then done, and that among forty Chriſtians there is not one that can certainly name the month in which his ſoul firſt began to be ſincere; and among a thouſand Chriſtians, I think not one can name the hour. The Sermon which awakened them, they may name, but not the hour when they firſt arrived at a ſaving ſincerity.

My advice therefore to all Chriſtians, is this; *Find Chriſt by his Spirit dwelling in your hearts, and then never trouble your ſelves, though you know not the time or manner of his entrance.* Do you value Chriſt above the world? and Reſolve to chuſe him before the world? and perform theſe Reſolutions? Then need you not doubt but the Spirit of Jeſus is victorious in you.

DOUBT

DOUBT II.

BUT I have oft read and heard, that a man cannot come to Christ till he feel the heavy burthen of sin: It is the weary and heavy-laden that Christ calleth to him. He bindeth up only the broken-hearted: he is a Physician only to those that feel themselves sick: he brings men to Heaven by the gates of Hell: They must be able to say, I am in a lost Condition, and in a state of damnation, and if I should die this hour I must perish for ever, before Christ will deliver them. God will not throw away the blood of his Son on those that feel not their absolute necessity of it, and that they are undone without it. But it was never thus with me to this day.

ANSWER.

1. YOu must distinguish carefully between Repentance as it is in the Mind and Will, and as it shews it self in the Passion of Sorrow. All that have saving interest in Christ, have their Judgements and Wills so far changed, that they know they are great sinners, and that there is no way to the obtaining of pardon and salvation but by Christ, and the free mercy of God in him; and thereupon they are convinced that if they remain without the Grace of Christ, they are undone for ever: Whereupon they understanding that Christ and Mercy is offered to them in the Gospel, do heartily and thankfully accept the offer, and would not be without Christ, or change their Hopes of his Grace for all the world, and do resolve to wait upon him for the further discovery

of his Mercy and the workings of his Spirit, in a Conſtant and Conſcionable uſe of his Means, and to be Ruled by him, to their power. Is it not thus with you? If it be, here is the Life and Subſtance of Repentance, which conſiſteth in this change of the mind and heart: and you have no Cauſe to Doubt of the truth of it, for want of more deep and paſſionate humiliation. 2. I have told you before how uncertain and unconſtant the Paſſionate effects of Grace are, and how unfit to Judge by, and given you ſeveral Reaſons of it. Yet I doubt not but ſome work upon the Affections there is, as well as on the Will and Underſtanding: but with ſo great diverſity of manner and degrees, that it is not ſafe Judging by it only or chiefly: Is there no degree of Sorrow or Trouble that hath touched your heart for your Sin or Miſery? If your Affections were no whit ſtir'd, you would hardly be moved to Action, to uſe means, or avoid iniquity, much leſs would you ſo oft complain as you do. 3. If God prevented thoſe hainous ſins in the time of your unregeneracy, which thoſe uſually are guilty of who are called to ſo deep a degree of ſorrow; you ſhould rather be thankful that your wound was not deeper, than troubled that the Cure coſt you no dearer. Look well whether the Cure be wrought in the change of your heart and life from the world to God by Chriſt, and then you need not be troubled that it was wrought ſo eaſily. 4. Were you not acquainted with the evil of ſin, and danger and miſery of ſinners in your very Childhood: and alſo of the neceſſity of a Saviour, and that Chriſt died to ſave all ſinners that will believe and Repent? and hath not this faſtened on your heart and been working in you by degrees ever ſince? If it be ſo, then you cannot expect that you ſhould

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have ſuch deep terrours as thoſe that never hear of ſin and Chriſt till the news come upon them ſuddenly in the ripeneſs of their ſin. There is a great deal of difference betwixt the Converſion of a Jew, or any other Infidel, who is brought on the ſudden to know the doctrine of Sin, Miſery and Salvation by Chriſt; and the Converſion of a Profeſſor of the Chriſtian Religion, who hath known this doctrine in ſome ſort from his Childhood, and who hath a ſound Religion, though he be not ſound in his Religion, and ſo needs not a Converſion to a ſound faith, but only to a ſoundneſs in the faith. The ſuddenneſs of the News muſt needs make thoſe Violent Commotions and Changes in the one, which cannot ordinarily be expected in the other, who is acquainted ſo early with the truth, and by ſuch degrees. 5. But ſuppoſe you heard nothing of Sin and Miſery, and a Redeemer in your Childhood, or at leaſt underſtood it not (which yet is unlikely) yet let me ask you this: Did not that Preacher, or that Book, or whatever other means God uſed for your Converſion, reveal to you Miſery and Mercy both together? Did not you hear and believe that Chriſt died for ſin, as ſoon as you underſtood your Sin and Miſery? Sure I am that the Scripture reveals both together: and ſo doth every ſound Preacher, and every ſound Writer (notwithſtanding that the ſlanderous Antinomians do ſhameleſly proclaim that we preach not Chriſt, but the Law.) This being ſo, you muſt eaſily apprehend that it muſt needs abate very much of the Terrour, which would elſe have been unavoidable. If you had read or heard that you were a ſinner, and the Child of Hell and of Gods wrath, and that there was no Remedy (which is ſuch a Preaching of the Law, as we muſt not uſe to any in

the world, nor any since the first promise to *Adam*, must receive;) Yea or if you had heard Nothing of a Saviour for a year, or a day, or an hour after you had heard that you were an Heir of Hell; and so the Remedy had been but Concealed from you, though not denied (which ordinarily must not be done) then you might in all likelihood have found some more terrours of soul that hour. But when you hard that your sin was pardonable as soon as you heard that you were a sinner, and heard that your misery had a sufficient Remedy provided, if you would accept it, or at least that it was not Remediless, and this as soon as you heard of that misery, what wonder is it if this exceedingly abate your fears and troubles! Suppose two men go to visit two several Neighbours that have the Plague, and one of them saith, *It is the Plague that is on you; you are but a Dead man:* The other saith to the other sick person, *It is the Plague that you have; but here is our Physician at the next door that hath a Receipt that will cure it as infallibly and as easily as if it were but the prick of a pin, he hath cured thousands and never fail'd one that took his Receipt, but if you will not send to him, and trust him, and take his Receipt, there is no hopes of you.* Tell me now whether the first of these sick persons be not like to be more troubled than the other? and whether it will not remove almost all the fears and troubles of the latter to hear of a Certain Remedy as soon as he heareth of the disease? though some trouble he must needs have to think that he hath a disease in it self so desperate or loathsome. Nay, let me tell you, so the Cure be but well done, the less Terrours and despairing fears you were put upon, the more credit is it to your Physician and his Apothecary, Christ and the Preacher

or Inſtrument that did the work: and therefore you ſhould rather praiſe your Phyſician, than queſtion the Cure.

DOUBT III.

BUT it is common with all the world to conſent to the Religion that they are bred up in, and ſomewhat affected with it, and to make Conſcience of obeying the precepts of it: ſo do the Jews in theirs: the Mahometans in theirs: And I fear it is no other work on my ſoul but the meer force of Education, that maketh me Religious, and that I had never that great Renewing work of the Spirit upon my ſoul; and ſo that all my Religion is but meer Opinion, or Notions in my Brain.

ANSWER.

1. ALL the Religions in the world, beſides the Chriſtian Religion, have either much errour and wickedneſs mixt with ſome Truth of God, or they contain ſome leſſer parcel of that Truth alone (as the Jews) Only the Chriſtian Religion hath that whole Truth which is ſaving. Now ſo much of Gods Truth as there is in any of theſe Religions, ſo much it may work Good effects upon their ſouls; as the knowledge of the Godhead, and that God is Holy, Good, Juſt, Merciful, and that he ſheweth them much undeſerved Mercy in his daily providences, &c. But mark theſe two things, 1. That all perſons of falſe Religions do more eaſily and greedily embrace the falſe part of their Religion than the true; and

those they are zealous for, and practise with all their might, because their natural corruption doth befriend it, and is as combustible fewel for the fire of Hell to catch in: but that Truth of God which is mixt with their Errour, if it be practical, they fight against it, and abhor it while they hold it, because it crosseth their lusts: insomuch that it is usually but some few of the more convinced and civil that God in providence maketh the main Instruments of continuing those Truths of his in that part of the wicked world: For we find that even among *Pagans*, the prophaner and more sensual sort did deride the better sort, as our prophane Christians do the godly whom they called Puritanes. 2. Note, that the Truth of God which in these false Religions is still acknowledged, is so small a part, and so oppprest by Errours, that it is not sufficient to their salvation (that is, to give them any sound Hope) nor is it sufficient to make such clear, and deep, and powerful Impressions in their minds as may make them Holy or truly Heavenly, or may overcome in them the Interest of the world and the flesh.

This being so, you may see great reason why a Turk or a Heathen may be zealous for his Religion without Gods Spirit, or any true Sanctification, when yet you cannot be so truly zealous for yours without it. Indeed the speculative part of our Religion, separated from the Practical, or from the hard and self-denying part of the Practical, many a wicked man may be zealous for: as to maintain the Godhead, or that God is merciful, &c. Or to maintain against the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, or against the Turks, that he is the only Redeemer and Teacher of the Church; or against the Papists, that all the Christians in the world are Christs Church

Church as well as the Romans; and againſt the Socinians and Arrians, that Chriſt is God, &c. But this is but a ſmall part of our Religion: nor doth this, or any Heatheniſh Zeal, ſanctifie the heart, or truly mortifie the fleſh, or overcome the world. They may contemn Life, and caſt it away for their Pride and vain-glory: but not for the hopes of a holy and bleſſed Life with God. This is but the prevalency of one corruption againſt another, or rather of vice againſt nature. There is a common Grace of God that goeth along with common Truths, and according to the meaſure of their obedience to the Truth, ſuch was the change it wrought; which was done by common Truths, and common Grace together, but not by their falſe mixtures at all. But God hath annexed his ſpecial Grace only to the ſpecial Truths of the Goſpel or Chriſtian-Religion. If therefore God do by common Grace work a great change on a Heathen by the means of common Truths, and do by his ſpecial Grace work a greater and ſpecial change on you, by the means of the ſpecial Truths of the Goſpel, have you any reaſon hereupon to ſuſpect your condition? or ſhould you not rather both admire that providence and common Grace which is manifeſted without the Church, and humbly, rejoycingly and thankfully embrace that ſpecial ſaving Grace which is manifeſted to your ſelf above them?

2. And for that which you ſpeak of *Education*, you have as much cauſe to doubt of your converſion, becauſe it was wrought by publick Preaching, as becauſe it was wrought by Education. For 1. Both are by the Goſpel: For it is the Goſpel that your Parents taught you, as well as which the Preacher teacheth you. 2. I have ſhewed you, that if Parents did

did not ſhamefully neglect their duties, the Word Publickly preached would not be the ordinary inſtrument of Regeneration to the Children of true Chriſtians, but would only build them up, and direct them in the faith, and in obedience. The proof is very plain: If we ſhould ſpeak nothing of the Intereſt of our Infants in the Covenant-Grace upon the Conditional force of their Parents faith, nor of their Baptiſm: yet *Deut.* 6. & *Epheſ.* 6. And oft in the *Proverbs* you may find that it is Gods ſtrict Command that Parents ſhould teach Gods Word to their Children, and bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord; yea with a prediction or half-promiſe, that if we train up a child in the way he ſhould go, when he is old he ſhall not depart from it, *Prov.* 22. 6. Now it's certain that God will uſually bleſs that which he appointeth to be the uſual means, if it be rightly uſed: For he hath appointed no means to be uſed in vain.

I hope therefore by this time you ſee, that inſtead of being troubled that the work was done on your ſoul by the means of Education. 1. You had more Reaſon to be troubled if it had been done firſt by the publick Preaching of the Word: For it ſhould grieve you at the heart to think, 1. That you lived in an unregenerate ſtate ſo long, and ſpent your childhood in vanity and ſin, and thought not ſeriouſly on God and your ſalvation, for ſo many years together. 2. And that you or your Parents ſin ſhould provoke God ſo long to withdraw his Spirit and deny you his Grace. 2. You may ſee alſo what unconceivable thanks you owe to God, who made Education the means of your early change. 1. In that he prevented ſo many and grievous ſins which elſe you would have been guilty of (And you may

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read in *Davids* and *Manasses* case, that even pardoned sins have oft-times very sad effects left behind them.) 2. That you have enjoyed Gods Spirit and Love so much longer than else you would have done. 3. That iniquity took not so deep rooting in you, as by custom it would have done. 4. That the Devil cannot Glory of that service which you did him, as else he might: and that the Church is not so much the worse, as else it might have been by the mischief you would have done: and that you need not all your daies look back with so much trouble, as else you must, upon the effects of your ill doing; nor with *Paul*, to think of one *Stephen*; yea many Saints in whose blood you first embrued your hands; and to cry out, *I was born out of due time: I am not worthy to be called a Christian, because I persecuted the Church of God: I was mad against them, and persecuted them into several Cities: I was sometime foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures.* Would you rather that God had permitted you to do this? 5. And methinks it should be a comfort to you, that your own father was the Instrument of your spiritual Good: that he that was the means of your Generation, was the means of your Regeneration: both because it will be a double comfort to your Parents, and because it will endear and engage you to them in a double bond. For my part, I know not what God did secretly in my heart before I had the use of memory and reason, but the first good that ever I felt on my soul, was from the Counsels and Teachings of my own Father in my childhood; and I take it now for a double mercy, being gladder that he was the Instrument to do me Good, than if it had been the best Preacher in the world: How foul an oversight is it then, that you should

ſhould be troubled at one of the choiceſt mercies of your life, yea that your life was capable of, and for which you owe to God ſuch abundant thanks!

DOUBT. IV.

BUt my great fear is, that the life of grace is not yet within me, becauſe I am ſo void of ſpiritual ſenſe and feeling: Methinks I am in ſpiritual things as dead as a Block, and my heart as hard as a Rock or the nether Mill-ſtone: Grace is a principle of new Life, and Life is a principle of ſenſe and motion: it cauſeth Vigour and Activity; ſuch ſhould I have in Duty if I had the Life of Grace. But I feel the great curſe of a dead heart within me: God ſeems to withdraw his quickening Spirit, and to forſake me; and to give me up to the hardneſs of my heart. If I were in Covenant with him, I ſhould feel the bleſſing of the Covenant within me; The hard heart would be taken out of my body, and a heart of fleſh, a ſoft heart would be given to me: But I cannot weep one tear for my ſins. I can think on the blood of Chriſt, and of my bloody ſins that cauſed it, and all will not wring one tear from mine eyes: And therefore I fear that my ſoul is yet deſtitute of the Life of Grace.

ANSWER.

1. A Soft heart conſiſteth in two things. 1. That the Will be perſwadable, tractable and yielding to God, and pliable to his will. 2. That the Affections or Paſſions be ſomewhat moved herewithall about ſpiritual things. Some degree more or leſs of the

the latter, doth concur with the former; but I have told you that it is the former wherein the heart and life of Grace doth lie, and that the latter is very various, and uncertain to try by. Many do much overlook the Scripture meaning of the word *Hard-heartedneſs*. Mark it up and down concerning the Iſraelites who are ſo oft charged by *Moſes*, *David*, *Iſaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and other Prophets to be hard-hearted, or to harden their hearts, or ſtiffen their necks; and you will find that the moſt uſual meaning of the Holy Ghoſt is this; They were an intractable, diſobedient, obſtinate people: or as the Greek word in the New Teſtament ſignifieth, which we often tranſlate *Unbelieving*, they were an *Unperſwadable* people: no ſaying would ſerve them. They ſet light by Gods Commands, Promiſes, and ſevereſt Threatnings, and Judgements themſelves: nothing would move them to forſake their ſins, and obey the voice of God. You ſhall find that hardneſs of heart is ſeldom put for want of tears, or a melting weeping diſpoſition; and never at all for the want of ſuch tears, where the will is tractable and obedient. I pray you examine your ſelf then according to this Rule. God offereth his Love in Chriſt, and Chriſt with all his benefits to you: Are you willing to Accept them? He commandeth you to worſhip him, and uſe his Ordinances, and Love his people, and others, and to forſake your known Iniquities, ſo far that they may not have dominion over you: Are you Willing to this? He commandeth you to take him for your God, and Chriſt for your Redeemer, and ſtick to him for better and worſe, and never forſake him. Are you willing to do this? If you have a ſtiff Rebellious heart, and will not Accept of Chriſt and Grace, and will rather let go Chriſt than the world, and will not be perſwaded from

from your known iniquities, but are loth to leave them, and love not to be reformed, and will not set upon those duties as you are able, which God requireth, and you are fully convinced of, then are you Hard-hearted in the Scripture sense. But if you are glad to have Christ with all your heart upon the terms that he is offered to you in the Gospel, and you do walk daily in the way of duty as you can, and are willing to pray, and willing to hear and wait on God in his Ordinances, and willing to have all Gods graces formed within you, and willing to let go your profitablest and sweetest sins, and it is your daily desires, O that I could seek God, and do his will more faithfully, zealously and pleasingly than I do! O that I were rid of this body of sin! these carnal, corrupt and worldly inclinations, and that I were as holy as the best of Gods Saints on earth! And if when it comes to practice, whether you should obey or no, though some unwillingness to duty, and willingness to sin be in you, you are offended at it, and the greater bent of your Will is for God, and it is but the lesser which is towards sin, and therefore the world and flesh do not lead you captive, and you live not wilfully in avoidable sins, nor at all in gross sin: I say, if it be thus with you, then you have the Blessing of a soft heart, a heart of flesh, a new heart: for it is a willing, obedient, tractable heart, opposed to obstinacy in sin, which Scripture calleth a soft heart. And then for the Passionate part, which consisteth in lively feelings of sin, misery, mercy, &c. and in weeping for sin, I shall say but this; 1. Many an unsanctified person hath very much of it, which yet are desperately Hard-hearted sinners. It dependeth far more on the temper of the body, than of the grace in the soul: Women usually can weep easily (and yet not all) and children,

children, and old men. Some complexions encline to it, and others not: Many can weep at a Paſſion-Sermon, or any moving duty, and yet will not be perſwaded to obedience: theſe are Hard-hearted ſinners for all their tears. 2. Many a tender godly perſon cannot weep for ſin; partly through the temper of their minds, which are more judicious and ſolid, and leſs paſſionate, but moſtly from the temper of their bodies, which diſpoſe them not that way. 3. Deepeſt ſorrows ſeldom cauſe tears, but deep thoughts of heart: as greateſt joyes ſeldom cauſe laughter, but inward pleaſure. Ile tell you how you ſhall know whoſe heart is truly ſorrowful for ſin and tender: He that would be at the greateſt coſt or pains to be rid of ſin, or that he had not ſinned. You cannot weep for ſin: but you would give all that you have to be rid of ſin; you could wiſh when you diſhonoured God by ſin, that you had ſpent that time in ſuffering rather; and if it were to do again on the ſame terms and inducements, you would not do it: Nay, you would live a beggar contentedly, ſo you might fully pleaſe God, and never ſin againſt him; and are content to pinch your fleſh, and deny your worldly intereſt for the time to come, rather than wilfully diſobey. This is a truly tender heart. On the other ſide, another can weep to think of his ſin; and yet if you ſhould ask him, What wouldſt thou give, or what wouldſt thou ſuffer, ſo thou hadſt not ſinned? or that thou mighteſt ſin no more? Alas, very little: For the next time that he is put to it, he will rather venture on the ſin, than venture on a little loſs, or danger, or diſgrace in the world, or deny his craving fleſh its pleaſures. This is a hard-hearted ſinner. The more you would part with to be rid of ſin, or the greateſt coſt you would be at for that end, the

more

more Repentance have you, and true tenderneſs of heart. Alas, if men ſhould go to Heaven according to their weeping, what abundance of children and women would be there for one man! Ile ſpeak truly my own Caſe. This doubt lay heavy many a year on my own ſoul: when yet I would have given all that I had to be rid of ſin; but I could not weep a tear for it. Nor could I weep for the death of my deareſt friends, when yet I would have bought their lives, had it been Gods will, at a dearer rate than many that could weep for them ten times as much. And now ſince my nature is decaied, and my body languiſheth in conſuming weakneſs, and my head more moiſtned, and my veins filled with flegmatick watry blood, now I can weep: and yet I find never the more tenderheartedneſs in my ſelf than before. And yet to this day ſo much remains of my old diſpoſition, that I could wring all the mony out of my purſe eaſier than one tear out of my eyes, to ſave a friend, or reſcue them from evil: when I ſee divers that can weep for a dead friend, that would have been at no great coſt to ſave their lives. 5. Beſides, as Dr. *Sibs* ſaith, There is oft ſorrow for ſin in us, when it doth not appear: It wanteth but ſome quickning word to ſet it afoot. It is the nature of Grief to break out into tears moſt, when ſorrow hath ſome vent, either when we uſe ſome expoſtulating aggravating terms with our ſelves, or when we are opening our hearts and caſe to a friend: then ſorrow will often ſhew it ſelf that did not before. 6. Yet do I not deny but that our want of Tears and tender affections and heart-meltings, are our ſins: For my part I ſee exceeding cauſe to bewail it greatly in my ſelf, that my ſoul is not raiſed to a higher pitch of tender ſenſibility of all ſpiritual things than it is: I doubt not but it

ſhould

ſhould be the matter of our daily confeſſion and complaint to God, that our hearts are ſo dull and little affected with his ſacred Truths, and our own ſins: But this is the ſcope of all my Speech, Why do not you diſtinguiſh between Matter of Sorrow and Matter of Doubting? No queſtion but you ſhould lament your dulneſs and ſtupidity, and uſe all Gods means for the quickning of your Affections, and to get the moſt lively frame of ſoul: but muſt it cauſe you to doubt of your ſincerity when you cannot obtain this? Then will you never have a ſetled Peace or Aſſurance for many dayes together, for ought I know. I would ask you but this: Whether you are willing or unwilling of all that hardneſs, inſenſibleneſs and dulneſs which you complain of? If you are willing of it, what makes you complain of it? If you are unwilling, it ſeems your Will is ſo far ſound; and it is the Will that is the ſeat of the Life of Grace which we muſt try by: And was not *Pauls* Caſe the ſame with yours? *Rom.* 7. 19. When he ſaith, *The Good which I would do, I do not*: and, *When I Would do Good, Evil is preſent with me.* I know *Paul* ſpeaks not of groſs ſins, but ordinary Infirmities: and I have told you before, that the Livelineſs and Senſibility of the Paſſions or Affections, is a thing that the Will, though ſanctified, cannot fully command or excite at its pleaſure. A ſanctified man cannot Grieve or Weep for ſin when he will, or ſo much as he will: he cannot Love, Joy, be Zealous, &c. When he will: He may be truly Willing, and not Able: And is not this your Caſe? And doth not *Paul* make it the Caſe of all Chriſtians? *Gal.* 5. 17. *The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh, and theſe are contrary one to the other, ſo that we cannot do the things*

but we would. Take my Counsel therefore in this, if you love not self-deceiving and disquietness. Search whether you can say unfeignedly, *I would wish all my heart have Christ and his quickning and sanctifying Spirit, and his softning Grace, to bring my hard heart to Tenderness, and my dull and blockish soul to a lively frame! O that I could attain it!* And if you can truly say thus, Bless God that hath given you saving sincerity: And then let all the rest of your Dulness, and Deadness, and Hard-heartedness be matter of daily sorrow to you, and spare not, so it be in Moderation, but let it be no matter of Doubting: Confess it, complain of it, pray against it, and strive against it: but do not deny Gods Graces in you for it.

And here let me mind you of one thing; That it is a very ill distemper of spirit when a man can mourn for nothing, but what Causeth him to Doubt of his salvation: It is a great Corruption, if when your Doubts are Resolved, and you are perswaded of your salvation, if then you cease all your humiliation and sorrow for your sin: For you must sorrow that you have in you such a body of Death, and that which is so displeasing to God, and are able to please and enjoy him no more, though you were never so Certain of the pardon of sin, and of salvation.

7. Lastly, Let me ask you one Question more: What is the reason that you are so troubled for want of Tears for your sin? Take heed lest there lye some Corruption in this trouble that you do not discern. If it be only because your deadness and dulness is your sin, and you would fain have your soul in that frame, in which it may be fittest to please God and enjoy him: then I commend and encourage you in your trouble. But take heed lest you should have any conceit of a Meritoriousness in your Tears: for that would

would be a more dangerous ſin than your want of Tears. And if it be for want of a ſign of Grace, and becauſe a dry eye is a ſign of an unregenerate ſoul; I have told you, It is not ſo, except where it only ſeconds an impenitent heart, and comes from, or accompanieth an unrenewed Will, and a prevailing unwillingneſs to turn to God by Chriſt. Shew me, if you can, where the Scripture ſaith, He that cannot Weep for ſin, ſhall not be Saved, or hath no true Grace? Is not your complaint in this the very ſame that the eminenteſt Chriſtians have uſed in all times? That moſt Bleſſed, Holy man, Mr. *Bradford*, who ſacrificed his life in the flames againſt Romiſh abominations, was wont to ſubſcribe his Spiritual Letters (Endited by the breath of the Spirit of God) thus: *The moſt miſerable Hard-hearted ſinner*, John Bradford.

DOUBT V.

OBut I am not willing to Good; and therefore I fear that even my will it ſelf is yet unchanged: I have ſuch a backwardneſs and undiſpoſedneſs to Duty, eſpecially ſecret Prayer, Meditation, and ſelf-examination, and reproving and exhorting ſinners, that I am fain to force my ſelf to it againſt my will. It is no Delight that I find in theſe Duties that brings me to them, but only I uſe violence with my ſelf, and am fain to pull my ſelf down on my knees, becauſe I know it is a Duty, and I cannot be ſaved without it: but I am no ſooner on my knees, but I have a motion to riſe, or be ſhort, and am weary of it, and find no great miſs of duty when I do omit it.

ANSWER.

1. THis ſhews that your ſoul is ſick when your meat goes ſo much againſt your ſtomack that you are fain to force it down: And ſickneſs may well cauſe you to complain to God and man. But what's this to Deadneſs! The Dead cannot force down their meat, nor digeſt it at all. It ſeems by this that you are ſanctified but in a low Degree, and your Corruption remains in ſome ſtrength; and let that be your ſorrow, and the overcoming of it be your greateſt care and buſineſs: But ſhould you therefore ſay that you are unſanctified? It ſeems that you have ſtill the fleſh luſting againſt the Spirit, that you cannot do the Good you would: when you would pray with Delight and unweariedneſs, the fleſh draws back, and the Devil is hindering you. And is it not ſo in too great a meaſure with the beſt on earth? Remember what Chriſt ſaid to his own Apoſtles, when they ſhould have done him one of their laſt Services, as to the attendance of his body on earth, and ſhould have comforted him in his Agony, they are all aſleep: Again and again he comes to them, and findeth them aſleep: Chriſt is praying and ſweating blood, and they are ſtill ſleeping, though he warned them to watch and Pray that they enter not into Temptation. But what doth God ſay to them for it? Why he uſeth this ſame Diſtinction between Humiliation for ſin, and Doubting of ſincerity and ſalvation, and he helps them to the former, and helps them againſt the latter; *Could ye not watch with me one hour?* ſaith he. There he convinceth them of the ſin, that they may be humbled for it. *The ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak,*

wish, saith he, There he utterly resisteth their Doubtings, or preventeth them; shewing them wherein sincere Grace consisteth, even in the Spirits willingness; and telling them that they had that Grace; and then telling them whence came their sin, even from the weakness of the flesh.

2. I have shewed you that as every mans Will is but partly sanctified (as to the Degree of holiness) and so far as it is imperfect, it will be unwilling; so that there is something in the Duties of secret Prayer, Meditation and Reproof, which makes most men more backward to them than other duties. The last doth so cross our fleshly Interests; and the two former are so spiritual, and require so pure and spiritual a soul, and set a man so immediately before the living God, as if we were speaking to him face to face, and have nothing of external pomp to draw us, that it is no wonder, if while there is flesh within us, we are backward to them! especially while we are so unacquainted with God, and while strangeness and consciousness of sin doth make us draw back: Besides that the Devil will more busily hinder us here than any where.

3. The Question therefore is not Whether you have an unwillingness and backwardness to Good? for so have all: Nor yet whether you have any cold uneffectual wishes? for so have the ungodly: But whether your Willingness be not more than your unwillingness? And in that, 1. It must not be in every single act of duty; for a godly man may be actually more unwilling to a duty at this particular time, than willing: and thereupon may omit it; but it must be about your Habitual Willingness, manifested in ordinary actual Willingness. 2. You must not exclude any of those Motives which God hath given

you to make you willing to Duty: He hath Commanded it; and his Authority ſhould move you: He hath Threatned you; and therefore Fear ſhould move you: Or elſe he would never have Threatned. He hath made Promiſes of Reward, and therefore the Hope of that ſhould move. And therefore you may perceive here what a dangerous miſtake it is to think that we have no Grace, except our Willingneſs to Duty be without Gods Motives, from a meer Love to the Duty it ſelf, or to its effect. Nay, it is a dangerous Antinomian miſtake to imagine that it is our duty to be Willing to Good without theſe Motives of God; I ſay, To take it ſo much as for our Duty, to exclude Gods Motives, though we ſhould not judge of our Grace by it. For it is but an Accuſation of Chriſt (and his Law) who hath ordained theſe Motives of Puniſhment and Reward, to be his Inſtruments to move the ſoul to duty. Let me therefore put the right Queſtion to you; *Whether all Gods motives laid together and conſidered, the ordinary prevailing part of your Will be not rather for Duty than againſt it?* This you will know by your practice. For if the prevailing part be againſt Duty, you will not do it: If it be for Duty, you will ordinarily perform it, though you cannot do it ſo well as you would. And then you may ſee that your backwardneſs and remaining unwillingneſs muſt ſtill be matter of Humiliation and reſiſtance to you; but not matter of Doubting. Nay thank God that enableth you to pull down your ſelf on your knees when you are unwilling: For what is that but the prevailing of your willingneſs againſt your unwillingneſs? Should your unwillingneſs once prevail, you would turn your back upon the moſt acknowledged Duties.

DOUBT.

DOUBT VI.

BUt I am afraid that it is only ſlaviſh fear of Hell, and not the Love of God, that cauſeth me to obey: and if it were not for this fear, I doubt whether I ſhould not quite give over all. And perfect Love caſteth out fear.

ANSWER.

I Have anſwered this already. Love will not be perfect in this life. In the life to come it will caſt out all fear of damnation: and all fear that drives the ſoul from God, and all fear of men (which is meant in *Rev.* 21. 8. Where the fearful and unbelievers are condemned; that is, thoſe that fear men more than God) And that 1 *Joh.* 4. 17, 18. Speaketh of a Tormenting Fear, which is it that I am perſwading you from, and conſiſteth in Terrours of ſoul upon an apprehenſion that God will condemn you; But it ſpeaketh not of a filial fear, nor of a fear left we ſhould by forſaking God, or by yielding to Temptation, loſe the Crown of Life, and ſo periſh: as long as this is not a tormenting fear, but a cautelous, preſerving, preventing fear. Beſides the Text plainly ſaith, *It is that we may have boldneſs in the day of judgement, that love caſteth out this fear*: And at that day of Judgement, Love will have more fully overcome it. It is a great miſtake to think that Filial Fear is only the fear of temporal chaſtiſement, and that all Fear of Hell is ſlaviſh. Even Filial Fear is a fear of Hell: But with this difference. A ſon (if he know himſelf to be a Son) hath ſuch a perſwaſion of his Fathers Love to him, that he knows

he will not cast him off, except he should be so vile as to renounce his Father; which he is moderately fearful or careful lest by Temptation he should be drawn to do, but not distrustfully fearful, as knowing the helps and mercies of his Father. But a slavish Fear is, when a man having no apprehensions of Gods love, or willingness to shew him mercy, doth look that God should deal with him as a slave, and destroy him when ever he doth amiss. It is this slavish Tormenting fear which I spend all this writing against. But yet a great deal even of this slavish fear may be in those sons, that know not themselves to be sons.

But suppose you were out of all fear of Damnation! do no belye your own heart, and tell me, Had you not rather be Holy than Unholy? pleasing to God than displeasing? and would not the Hope of Salvation draw you from sin to duty, without the fear of Damnation in Hell? But you will say, That is still Mercenary, and as bad as slavish fears. I answer, Not so, This Hope of Salvation, is the Hope of enjoying God, and living in perfect Pleasingness to him, and pleasure in him in Glory; And the Desire of this is a Desire of Love: It is Love to God that makes you Desire him, and Hope to enjoy him.

Lastly, I say again Take heed of separating what God hath joyned. If God, by putting in your nature the several Passions of Hope, Fear, Love, *&c.* and by putting a Holiness into these Passions, by sanctifying Grace, and by putting both Promises and dreadful Threatnings into his Word; I say, if God by all these means hath given you several motives to obedience, take heed of separating them: Do not once ask your heart such a question, Whether it would obey if there were no Threatning, and so no Fear? Nor on the other side, do not let Fear do all, without

Love. Doubtleſs the more Love conſtraineth to duty, the better it is: and you ſhould endeavour with all your might that you might feel more of the force of Love in your duties: But do you not mark how you cheriſh that Corruption that you complain of? Your Doubts and Tormenting Fears are the things that Love ſhould caſt out. Why then do you entertain them? If you ſay, I cannot help it: why then do you cheriſh them? and own them? and plead and diſpute for them? and ſay you do well to Doubt, and you have Cauſe? Will this ever caſt out Tormenting Fears? Do you not know that the way to caſt them out, is not to maintain them by diſtruſtful thoughts or words, but to ſee their ſinfulneſs, and abhor them, and to get more high thoughts of the Loving kindneſs of God, and the tender mercies of the Redeemer, and the unſpeakable Love that he hath manifeſted in his ſufferings for you, and ſo the Love of God may be more advanced and powerful in your ſoul, and may be able to caſt out your Tormenting Fears. Why do you not do this inſtead of Doubting? If Tormenting Fears and Doubtings be a ſin, why do you not make Conſcience of them? and bewail it that you have been ſo guilty of them? Will you therefore Doubt becauſe you have ſlaviſh fears? Why that is to Doubt becauſe you Doubt; and to Fear becauſe you Fear; and ſo to ſin ſtill becauſe you have ſinned. Conſider well of the folly of this courſe.

DOUBT VII.

BUT I am not able to Believe: and without Faith there is no pleaſing God, nor hope of ſalvation, I fear Unbelief will be my ruine.

ANSWER.

ANSWER.

1. I Have answered this Doubt fully before. It is grounded on a Mistake of the Nature of true Faith. You think that Faith is the Believing that you are in Gods favour, and that you are Justified; but properly this is no Faith at all, but only Assurance, which is sometimes a fruit of Faith, and sometimes never in this life obtained by a Believer. Faith consisteth of two parts; 1. Assent to the Truth of the Word 2. Acceptance of Christ as he is offered; Which immediately produceth a Trusting on Christ for salvation, and consent to be Governed by him; and Resolution to obey him; which in the fullest sense are also acts of Faith. Now do not you Believe the truth of the Gospel? And do you not Accept of Christ as he is offered therein? If you are truly willing to have Christ as he is offered, I dare say you are a true Believer. If you be not willing, for shame never complain. Men use rather to speak against those that they are unwilling of, than complain of their absence, and that they cannot enjoy them.

2. However, seeing you complain of unbelief, in the Name of God do not cherish it, and plead for it, and by your own cogitations fetch in daily matter to feed it: but do more in detestation of it, as well as complain.

DOUBT VIII.

BUT I am a stranger to the witness of the Spirit, and the Joy of the Holy Ghost, and Communion with God, and therefore how can I be a true Believer?

ANSWER.

ANSWER.

1. FEeding your Doubts and Perplexities, and arguing for them, is not a means to get the Teſtimony and Joy of the Spirit: but rather ſtudying with all Saints to know the love of God which paſſeth knowledge, to comprehend the height, and bredth, and length, and depth of his Love: and ſeeking to underſtand the things that are given you of God. Acknowledge Gods general Love to Mankind, both in his Gracious Nature, and Common Providences, and Redemption by Chriſt, and deny not his Special Mercies to your ſelf, but dwell in the ſtudy of the Riches of Grace, and that's the way to come to the Joy of the Holy Ghoſt. 2. I have told you before what the witneſs of the Spirit, is and what is the ordinary miſtake herein. If you have the Graces and holy operations of the Spirit, you have the witneſs of the Spirit, whether you know it or not. 3. If by your own doubtings you have deprived your ſelf of the Joy of the Holy Ghoſt, bewail it, and do ſo no more; but do not therefore ſay you have not the Holy Ghoſt. For the Holy Ghoſt often works Regeneration and Holineſs before he works any ſenſible Joys. 4. You have ſome hope of ſalvation by Chriſt left in you: You be not yet in utter deſpair: And is it no Comfort to you to think that you have yet any Hope? and are not quite paſt all Remedy? It may be your ſorrows may ſo cloud it that you take no notice of it: but I know you cannot have the leaſt Hope without ſome anſwerable Comfort. And may not that Comfort be truly the Joy of the Holy Ghoſt? 5. And for Communion with God, let me ask you: Have you no recourſe to him

him by Prayer in your ſtraits? Do you not wait at his mouth for the Law and direction of your life? Have you received no holy deſires, or other Graces from him? Nay, are you ſure that you are not a member of Chriſt, who is one with him? How can you then ſay, that you have no Communion with him? Can there be Communication of Prayer and Obedience from you? yea your own ſelf delivered up to Chriſt? and a Communication of any life of Grace from God, by Chriſt and the Spirit? and all this without Communion? It cannot be. Many a ſoul hath moſt near Communion with Chriſt that knows it not.

DOUBT IX.

I Have not the ſpirit of Prayer: When I ſhould pour out my ſoul to God, I have neither bold acceſs, nor matter of Prayer, nor words.

ANSWER.

DO you know what the ſpirit of Prayer is? It containeth, 1. Deſires of the ſoul after the things we want, eſpecially Chriſt and his Graces. 2. An addreſſing our ſelves to God with theſe Deſires, that we may have help and relief from him. Have not you both theſe? Do you not deſire Chriſt and Grace, Juſtification and Sanctification? Do you not look to God as him who alone is able to ſupply your wants, and bids you ask that you may receive? Do you utterly deſpair of help, and ſo ſeek to none? Or do you make your addreſſes by prayer to any but God? But perhaps you look at words, and matter to dilate upon,

on, that you may be able to hold out in a long ſpeech to God, and you think that it is the effect of the ſpirit of Prayer. But where do you find that in Gods word? I confeſs that in many, and moſt, the ſpirit which helpeth to Deſires, doth alſo help to ſome kind of expreſſions: Becauſe if a man be of able natural parts, and have a tongue to expreſs his own mind, the promoting of holy Deſires will help men to expreſſions. For a full ſoul is hardly hindered from venting it ſelf: And experience teacheth us, that the ſpirits enflaming the heart with holy Affections, doth very much furniſh both the Invention and Expreſſion But this is but accidental and uncertain: for thoſe that are either men of unready tongues, or that are ſo ill bred among the rude vulgar, that they want fit expreſſions of their own minds, or that are of over-baſhful diſpoſitions, or eſpecially that are of ſmall knowledge, and of little and ſhort acquaintance with thoſe that ſhould teach them to pray by their example, or that have been but of ſhort ſtanding in the School of Chriſt, ſuch a man may have the ſpirit of Prayer many a year, and never be able in full expreſſions of his own to make known his wants to God: no, nor in good and tolerable ſenſe and language, before others to ſpeak to God, from his own Invention. A man may know all thoſe Articles of the Faith that are of flat neceſſity to Salvation, and yet not be able to find matter or words for the opening of his heart to God at length. I would adviſe ſuch, to frequent the Company of thoſe that can teach and help them in Prayer, and neglect not to uſe the ſmalleſt parts they have, eſpecially in ſecret, between God and their own ſouls, where they need not ſo much as in publick to be regardful of expreſſions: and in the mean time to learn a Prayer from ſome Book, that may

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fitliest express their necessities; or to use the Book it self in Prayer, if they distrust their memories: not resolving to stick here, and make it a means of indulging their lazines and negligence, much less to reproach and deride those that express their desires to God from the present sense of their own wants (as some wickedly do deride such:) but to use this lawful help till they are able to do better without it than with it, and then to lay it by, and not before. The Holy Ghost is said, *Rom.*8.16. To help our infirmities in Prayer: but how? 1. By teaching us what to pray for; not alwayes what matter or words to enlarge our selves by; but what necessary Graces to pray for. 2. By giving us sighs and Groans unexpressible; which is far from giving Copious expressions: For Groans and sighs be not words, and if they be Groans that we cannot express, it would rather seem to intimate a want of expression, than a constant abounding therein, where the spirit doth assist; Though indeed the meaning is, that the Groans are so deep, that they are past the expression of our words: All our speech cannot express that deep sense that is in our hearts. For the Understanding hath the advantage of the Affections herein; All the thoughts of the mind may be expressed to others, but the Feelings and fervent Passions of the soul can be but very defectively expressed.

Lastly, All have not the spirit of Prayer in like measure: nor all that have it in a great measure at one time, can find it so at pleasure. Desires rise and fall, and these earnest Groans be not in every Prayer where the Holy Ghost doth assist. I believe there is never a Prayer that ever a believer did put up to God for things lawful and useful, but it was put up by the help of the spirit. For the weakest Prayer hath some degree of good Desire in it, and addresses to God with

with an endeavour to expreſs them: and theſe can come from none but only from the ſpirit: Meer words without deſires are no more Prayer, than a ſuit of apparel han'gd on a ſtake is a man. You may have the ſpirit of Prayer, and yet have it in a very weak degree.

Yet ſtill I would encourage you to bewail your defect herein as your ſin, and ſeek earneſtly the ſupply of your wants; But what's that to the queſtioning or denying your ſincerity, or right to ſalvation?

DOUBT X.

I Have no Gifts to make me uſeful to my ſelf or others. When I ſhould profit by the Word, I cannot Remember it: When I ſhould Reprove a Sinner, or Inſtruct the Ignorant, I have not words: if I were called to give an account of my Faith, I have not words to expreſs that which is in my mind: And what Grace can here be then?

ANSWER.

THis needs no long Anſwer. Lament and amend thoſe ſins by which you have been diſabled. But know, that theſe Gifts depend more on Nature, Art, Induſtry and common Grace, than upon ſpecial ſaving Grace. Many a bad man is excellent in all theſe, and many a one that is truly godly is defective. Where hath God laid our ſalvation upon the ſtrength of our Memories, the Readineſs of our Tongues, or meaſure of the like Gifts? That were almoſt as if he ſhould have made a Law, that all ſhall be ſaved that have ſound Complexions, and healthful and youthful bodies, and all be damned that are ſickly, aged, weak, children, and moſt women.

DOUBT

DOUBT XI.

OBut I have been a grievous sinner, before I came home, and have fallen foully since, and I am utterly unworthy of Mercy! Will the Lord ever save such an unworthy wretch as I? will he ever give his Mercy and the blood of his, to one that hath so abused it?

ANSWER.

1. THe Question is not, with God, what you have been, but what you are? God takes men as they then are, and not as they were. 2. It is a dangerous thing to object the greatness of your Guilt against Gods mercy and Christs Merits! Do you think Christs satisfaction is not sufficient? or that he died for small sins and not for great? Do you not know that he hath made satisfaction for all, and will pardon all, and hath given out the pardon of all in his Covenant, and that to all men, on Condition they will Accept Christ to pardon, and heal them in his own way? Hath God made it his great design in the work of mans Redemption to make his Love and Mercy as Honourable and wonderful, as he did his Power in the work of Creation? and will you after all this oppose the greatness of your sins against the greatness of this Mercy and Satisfaction? Why, you may as well think your self to be such a one that God could not or did not Make you, as to think your sins so great that Christ could not or did not satisfie for them, or will not pardon them, if you Repent and Believe in him. 3. And for Worthiness,

Worthineſs, I pray you obſerve: There is a two-fold Worthineſs and Righteouſneſs. There is a Legal Worthineſs and Righteouſneſs, which conſiſteth in a perect obedience, which is the performance of the Conditions of the Law of Pure Nature and Works. This no man hath but Chriſt: and if you look after this Righteouſneſs or Worthineſs in your ſelf, then do you depart from Chriſt, and make him to have died and ſatisfied in vain: You are a Jew and not a Chriſtian, and are one of thoſe that *Paul* ſo much diſputeth againſt, that would be Juſtified by the Law. Nay, you muſt not ſo much as once imagine that all your own Works can be any part of this Legal Righteouſneſs or Worthineſs to you. Only Chriſts Satisfaction and Merit is in ſtead of this our Legal Righteouſneſs and Worthineſs. God never gave Chriſt and Mercy to any but the unworthy in this ſenſe: If you know not your ſelf to be unworthy and unrighteous in the ſenſe of the Law of Works you cannot know what Chriſts Righteouſneſs is. Did Chriſt come to ſave any but ſinners, and ſuch as were loſt? what need you a Saviour, if you were not Condemned? and how come you to be condemned, if you were not unrighteous and unworthy? But then 2. There is an Evangelical perſonal Worthineſs and Righteouſneſs, which is the Condition on which God beſtows Chriſts Righteouſneſs upon us: and this all have that will be ſaved by Chriſt. But what is that? Why, it hath two parts: 1. The Condition and Worthineſs required to your Union with Chriſt and pardon of all your ſins paſt, and your Adoption and Juſtification; it is no more but *your hearty and thankful Acceptance of the Gift that is freely Given you of God by his Covenant grant, that is, Chriſt and life in him*, 1 Joh. 5. 10, 11, 12. There is no worthineſs required in you before Faith as a Condi-

tion on which God will give you Faith: but only certain means you are appointed to use for the obtaining it: And Faith it self is but the Acceptance of a free Gift. God requireth you not to bring any other Worthiness or Price in your hands; but that you consent unfeignedly to have Christ as he is offered, and to the ends and uses that he is offered: that is, as one that hath satisfied for you by his blood and merits, to put away your sins, and as one that must illuminate and Teach you, Sanctifie, and Guide, and Govern you by his Word and Spirit; and as King and Judge will fully and finally Justifie you at the day of Judgement, and give you the Crown of Glory. Christ on his part 1. Hath merited your pardon by his satisfaction, and not properly by his sanctifying you: 2. And sanctified you by his Spirit, and Ruleth you by his Laws, and not directly by his blood-shed: 3. And he will justifie you at Judgement as King and Judge, and not as Satisfier or Sanctifier: But the Condition on your part of obtaining Interest in Christ and his benefits, is that one Faith which accepteth him in all these respects (both as King, Priest and Teacher) and to all these ends conjunctly. But then 2. The Condition and Worthiness required to the Continuation and Consummation of your Pardon, Justification, and right to Glory, is both the Continuance of your faith, and your sincere obedience, even your keeping the Baptismal Covenant that you made with Christ by your Parents, and the Covenant which you in your own person made with him in your first true Believing. These indeed are called *Worthiness and Righteousness* frequently in the Gospel: but it is no worthiness consisting in any such works which make the Reward to be of Debt, and not of Grace (of which *Paul* speaks) but only in faith, and such Gospel-works

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as *James* ſpeaks of, which make the Reward to be wholly of Grace and not Debt.

Now if you ſay you are unworthy in this Evangelical ſenſe, then you muſt mean (if you know what you ſay) that you are an Infidel or Unbeliever, or an Impenitent obſtinate Rebel that would not have Chriſt to reign over him: For the Goſpel calleth none Unworthy (as non-performers of its Conditions) but only theſe. But I hope you dare not charge your ſelf with ſuch Infidelity and wilful Rebellion.

DOUBT. XII.

THough God hath kept me from Groſs ſins, yet I find ſuch a ſearedneſs of Conſcience, and ſo little averſeneſs from ſin in my mind, that I fear that I ſhould Commit it if I lay under Temptations; and alſo that I ſhould not hold out in Trial if I were called to ſuffer Death or any grievous Calamity. And that obedience which endureth meerly for want of a Temptation, is no true Obedience.

ANSWER.

1. I Have fully anſwered this before. If you can overcome the temptations of Proſperity, you have no cauſe to doubt diſtruſtfully whether you ſhall overcome the temptations of Adverſity: And if God give you grace to avoid Temptations to ſin, and fly occaſions as much as you can, and to overcome them where you cannot avoid them; you have little reaſon to diſtruſt his preſervation of you, and your ſtedfadneſs thereby, if you ſhould be caſt upon greater Temptations. Indeed if you feel not ſuch

a Belief of the evil and danger of sinning as to possess you with some sensible hatred of it, you have need to look to your heart for the strengthning of that belief and hatred: and fear your heart with a godly preserving jealousie; but not with tormenting disquieting Doubts. Whatever your Passionate Hatred be, if you have a settled well-grounded Resolution, to walk in obedience to the death, you may confidently and comfortably trust him for your preservation, who gave you those resolutions.

2. And the last sentence of this Doubt had need of great Caution, before you conclude it a certain Truth. It's true, that the Obedience which by an ordinary Temptation, such as men may expect would be overthrown, is not well grounded and rooted before it is overthrown. But it's a great Doubt whether there be not Degrees of Temptation possible, which would overcome the Resolution and Grace of the most Holy, having such assistance as the Spirit usually giveth Believers in Temptation? And whether some Temptations which overcome not a strong Christian, would not overcome a weak one, who yet hath true Grace? I conclude nothing of these Doubts. But I would not have you trouble your self upon confident conclusions on so doubtful grounds. This I am certain of, 1. That the strongest Christian should take heed of Temptation, and not trust to the strength of his graces, nor presume on Gods preservation while he wilfully casteth himself in the mouth of dangers; nor to be encouraged hereunto upon any perswasion of an Impossibility of his falling away. O the falls, the fearful falls that I have known (alas, how often) the eminentest men for godliness that ever I knew, to be guilty of, by casting themselves upon Temptations. I confess I will never be confident of that mans perseverance,

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were he the beſt that I know on earth, who caſteth himſelf upon violent Temptations, eſpecially the Temptations of Senſuality, Proſperity, and Seducement. 2. I know God hath taught us daily to watch and pray, that we enter not into Temptation; and to pray, *Lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from evil.* (I never underſtood the neceſſity of that Petition feelingly, till I ſaw the examples of theſe ſeven or eight years laſt paſt.) This being ſo, you muſt look that your perſeverance ſhould be by being preſerved from Temptation; and muſt rather examine whether you have that Grace which will enable you to avoid Temptations, than whether you have grace enough to overcome them, if you ruſh into them. But if God unavoidably caſt you upon them, keep up your Watch and Prayer, and you have no cauſe to trouble your ſelf with diſtruſtful fears.

DOUBT XIII.

I Am afraid leſt I have committed the unpardonable ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and then there is no hope of my ſalvation.

ANSWER.

IT ſeems you know not what the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt is; It is this, When a man is convinced that Chriſt and his Diſciples did really work thoſe glorious Miracles which are recorded in the Goſpel, and yet will not Believe that Chriſt is the Son of God, and his Doctrine true, though ſealed with all thoſe Miracles and other holy and wonderful

works of the Spirit, but do blaſphemouſly maintain that they were done by the Power of the Devil. This is the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt: And dare you ſay that you are guilty of this? If you be, then you do not Believe that Chriſt is the Son of God, and the Meſſiah, and his Goſpel true. And then you will ſure oppoſe him, and maintain that he was a Deceiver, and that the Devil was the Author of all the miraculous and gracious workings of his Spirit. Then you will never fear his diſpleaſure, nor call him ſeriouſly either Lord or Saviour! nor tender him any ſervice, any more than you do to *Mahomet*. None but Infidels do commit the Blaſphmy againſt the Holy Ghoſt: Nor but few of them. Unbelief is eminently called [*Sin*] in the Goſpel: and that [*Unbelief*] which is maintained by Blaſpheming the glorious Works of the Holy Ghoſt, which Chriſt and his Diſciples through many years time did perform for a Teſtimony to his Truth, that is called ſingularly [*The ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*] You may meet with other Deſcriptions of this ſin, which may occaſion your terrour: but I am fully perſwaded that this is the plain truth.

DOUBT XIV.

BUt I greatly fear leſt the time of Grace be paſt: and leſt I have out-ſat the day of mercy, and now mercy hath wholly forſaken me. For I have oft heard Miniſters tell me from the Word; Now is the Accepted time; Now is the day of your Viſitation; To day, while it is called to day, harden not your hearts, leſt God ſwear in his wrath that you ſhall not enter into his Reſt. But I have ſtood out long after, I have reſiſted and quenched the Spirit, and now it is I fear departed from me.

ANSWER.

ANSWER.

HEre is ſufficient matter for Humiliation: but the Doubting ariſeth meerly from ignorance: The day of Grace may in two reſpects be ſaid to be over: The firſt (and moſt properly ſo called) is, *When God will not Accept of a ſinner, though he ſhould Repent and Return.* This is never in this life for certain. And he that imagineth any ſuch thing, as that it is too late while his ſoul is in his body, to Repent and Accept of Chriſt and Mercy, is meerly ignorant of the Tenour and ſenſe of the Goſpel: For the New Law of Grace doth limit no time on earth for Gods Accepting of a Returning ſinner. True Faith and Repentance do as ſurely ſave at the laſt hour of the day, as at the firſt. God hath ſaid, that whoſoever believeth in Chriſt, ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life. He hath no where excepted late Believers or Repenters: Shew any ſuch Exception if you can.

2. The ſecond ſenſe in which it may be ſaid that the day of Grace is over, is this: *When a man hath ſo long reſiſted the Spirit, that God hath given him over to wilfull obſtinate Refuſals of Mercy, and of Chriſts Government, reſolving that he will never give him the prevailing grace of his Spirit.* Where note, 1. That this ſame man might ſtill have Grace as ſoon as any other, if he were but Willing to Accept Chriſt, and Grace in him. 2. That no man can know of himſelf or any other, that God hath thus finally forſaken him: For God hath given us no ſign to know it by; (at leaſt who ſin not againſt the Holy Ghoſt.) God hath not told us his ſecret intents concerning ſuch. 4. Yet ſome men have far greater cauſe to fear it than others;

especially those men, who under the most searching lively Sermons, do continue secure and wilful in known wickedness; either hating godliness and godly persons, and all that do reprove them, or at least being stupified, that they feel no more than a Post the force of Gods terrours, or the sweetness of his promises; but make a jest of sinning, and think the life of godliness a needless thing. Especially if they grow old in this course, I confess such have great cause to fear lest they are quite forsaken of God: For very few such are ever recovered. 5. And therefore it may well be said to all men, *To day if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts, &c.* And, *This is the Acceptable time: this is the day of salvation*; both as this life is called, *The day of salvation*; and because no man is certain to live another day, that he may Repent; nor yet to have Grace to Repent if he live. 6. But what's all this to you that do Repent? Can you have cause to fear that your day of Grace is over, that have received Grace? Why, that is as foolish a thing, as if a man should come to the Market, and buy Corn, and when he hath done, go home lamenting that the Market was past before he came? Or as a man should come and hear the Sermon, and when he hath done, lament that the Sermon was done before he came? If your day of Grace be past, tell me (and do not wrong God) Where had you the Grace of Repentance? How came you by that grace of holy Desires? Who made you Willing to have Christ for your Lord and Saviour? So that you had rather have him, and Gods favour, and a holy heart and life, than all the glory of the world? How came you to desire that you were such a one as God would have you to be? and to desire that all your sins were dead, and might never live in you more? and that you

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were able to Love God, and Delight in him, and please him even in perfection? and that you are so troubled that you cannot do it? Are these signs that your day of Grace is over? Doth Gods Spirit breath out Groans after Christ and Grace, within you? and yet is the day of Grace over? Nay, what if you had no Grace? Do you not hear God daily offering you Christ and Grace? Doth he not entreat and beseech you to be reconciled unto him (2 *Cor.* 5. 19, 20.) And would he not compel you to come in? (*Mat.* 22.) Do you not feel some unquietness in your sinful Condition? and some motions and strivings at your heart to get out of it? Certainly (though you should be one that hath yet no Grace to salvation) yet these continued offers of Grace, and strivings of the Spirit of Christ with your heart, do shew that God hath not quite forsaken you; and that your Day of Grace and Visitation is not past.

DOUBT XV.

BUT I have sinned since my Profession, and that even against my Knowledge and Conscience: I have had Temptations to sin, and I have considered of the Evil and Danger, and yet in the very sobereſt deliberations, I have resolved to sin. And how can such a one have any true Grace, or be saved?

ANSWER.

1. IF you had not true Grace, God is still offering it, and ready to work it. 2. Where do you find in Scripture that none who have true Grace, do sin

sin knowingly or deliberately; Perhaps you will say in *Heb.*10.24. *If we sin wilfully after the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of Judgement, and fire which shall devour the adversaries. Ans.* But you must know that it is not every wilful sin which is there mentioned; but, as even now I told you, *Unbelief* is peculiarly called *Sin* in the New Testament: And the true meaning of the Text is, *If we utterly renounce Christ by Infidelity, as not being the true Messiah, after we have known his Truth, then, &c.* Indeed none sin more against knowledge than the godly when they do sin: For they know more, for the most part, than others do. And Passion and Sensuality (the remnant of it which yet remaineth) will be working strongly in your very Deliberations against sin, and either perverting the Judgement to doubt whether it be a sin, or whether there be any such danger in it? or whether it be not a very little sin? Or else blinding it, that it cannot see the Arguments against the sin in their full vigour: Or at least, prepossessing the Heart and Delight, and so hindring our Reasons against sin, from going down to the Heart, and working on the Will; and so from Commanding the Actions of the Body. This may befall a godly man. And moreover, God may withdraw his Grace, as he did from *Peter* and *David* in their sin: and then our Considerations will work but faintly, and sensuality and sinful Passion will work effectually. It is scarce Possible, I think, that such a man as *David* could be so long about so horrid a sin, and after contrive the murther of *Uriah*, and all this without deliberation, or any reasonings in himself to the contrary.

3. The truth is, though this be no good cause for any Repenting sinner to doubt of Salvation, yet it is a very grievous aggravation of sin, to commit it against

againſt Knowledge and Conſcience, and upon conſideration. And therefore I adviſe all that Love their Peace or Salvation, to take heed of it. For as they will find that no ſin doth deepher wound the Conſcience, and plunge the ſinner into fearful perplexities: which oft-times hang on him very long; ſo the oftner ſuch ſin is committed, the leſs evidence will ſuch a one have of the ſincerity of their faith and obedience: And therefore in the name of God beware. And let the troubled ſoul make this the matter of his moderate Humiliation, and ſpare not. Bewail it before God. Take ſhame to your ſelf, and freely confeſs it, when you are called to it before men: Favour it not, and deal not gently with it, if you would have Peace: but give glory to God by taking the juſt diſhonour to your ſelves. Tender dealing is an ill ſign, and hath ſad effects. But yet for every ſin againſt knowledge to doubt of the Truth of Grace, is not right, much leſs to doubt of the pardon of that ſin when we truly repent of it. Are you unfeignedly ſorry for your ſins againſt Conſcience, and reſolve againſt them for the future, through the help of Gods grace? If ſo, then that ſin is pardoned now, through the blood of Chriſt believed in, whether you had then grace or not.

DOUBT XVI.

BUT I have ſuch Corruptions in my nature, that I cannot overcome: I have ſuch a paſſionate nature, and ſuch a vanity of mind, and ſuch worldly deſires, that though I pray and ſtrive againſt them daily, yet do they prevail: And it is not ſtriving without overcoming that will prove the truth of Grace in any. Beſides, I do not grow in grace as all Gods people do.

ANSWER.

ANSWER.

1. DO you think sin is not overcome as long as it dwelleth in us, and daily troubleth us, and is working in us? *Paul* saith, *The evil that I would not do, that I do*: And, *We cannot do the things that we would*: And yet *Paul* was not overcome of these sins, nor had they Dominion over him. You must consider of these sins as in the habit, or in the Act. In the Habit as they are in the Passions they will be still strong: but as they are in the Will they are weak and overcome. Had you not rather you were void of these Passions, than not? and that you might restrain them in the Act? Are you not weary of them, and daily pray and strive against them? If so, it seems they have not your will. 2. And for the Actual Passion (as I may call it) it self, you must distinguish between 1. Those which the Will hath full power of, and which it hath but partial power over. 2. And between the several Degrees of the Passion. 3. And between the inward Passion and the outward expressions.

Some Degree of anger and of lust will oft stir in the heart, whether he Will or not. But I hope you restrain it in the Degree; and much more from breaking out into Practices of lust, or Cursed speeches, or Railings, Backbitings, Slanderings or Revenge: For these, your Will, if sanctified, hath power to command. Even the Acts of our Corruptions as well as the Habits will stick by us in this life; but if it be in gross sins, or avoidable Infirmities carelesly or wilfully continued in, I can tell you a better way to Assurance and Comfort than your Complaints are.

In

In ſtead of being afraid leſt you cannot have your ſin and Chriſt together, do but more heartily oppoſe that ſin, and deal roundly and conſcionably againſt it, till you have overcome it, and then you may eaſe your ſelf of your complaints and troubles. If you ſay, *O but it is not ſo eaſily done: I cannot overcome it: I have prayed and ſtrove againſt it long.* I anſwer, But are you heartily willing to be rid of it? If you will, it will be no impoſſible matter to be rid of the outward expreſſions, and the high Degree of the Paſſion, though not of every degree. Try this courſe a while, and then judge: 1. Plainly confeſs your Guiltineſs. 2. Never more excuſe it or plead for it, to any that blameth you. 3. Deſire thoſe that live and deal with you, to tell you roundly of it as ſoon as they diſcern it, and engage your ſelf to them to take it well, as a friendly action which your ſelf requeſted of them. 4. When you feel the Paſſion begin to ſtir, enter into ſerious Conſideration of the ſinfulneſs, or go and tell ſome friend of your frail inclination, and preſently beg their help againſt it. If it be godly perſons that you are angry with, in ſtead of giving them ill words, preſently as ſoon as you feel the fire kindle, ſay to them, *I have a very paſſionate nature, which already is kindled, I pray you reprehend me for it, and help me againſt it, and pray to God for my deliverance.* Alſo go to God your ſelf, and complain to him of it, and beg his help. Laſtly, Be ſure that you make not light of it: and ſee that you avoid the occaſions as much as you can. If you are indeed willing to be rid of the ſin, then do not call theſe directions too hard: But ſhew your willingneſs in ready practiſing them. And thus you may ſee that it is better make your corruptions the matter of your humiliation and reformation, than of your Torment.

And

And for the other part of the Doubt, that you grow not in grace: I answer, 1. The promises of growth are Conditional, or else signifie what God will usually do for his people: but it is certain that they be not Absolute to all Believers. For it is certain that all true Christians do not alway grow; nay, that many do too oft decline, and lose their first fervour of Love, and fall into sin, and live more Carelesly: Yea, it is certain that a true Believer may Die in such Decaies, or in a far lower state than formerly he hath been in. If I thought this needed proof, I could easily prove it: But he that openeth his eyes may soon see enough proof in *England*. 2. Many Christians do much mistake themselves about the very nature of true grace; and then no wonder if they think that they thrive when they do not, and that they thrive not when they do. They think that more of the life and truth of grace doth lie in Passionate Feelings of Sin, Grace, Duty, &c. In sensible Zeal, Grief, Joy, &c. And do not know that the chief part lieth in the Understandings Estimation, and the Wills firm Choice and Resolution. And then they think they decline in grace, because they cannot Weep, or Joy so sensibly as before. Let me assure you of this as truth; 1. Young people have usually more vigour of Affections than old; because they have more vigour of body, and hot blood, and agile active spirits: when the freezing decayed bodies and spirits of old men must needs make an abatement of their fervour in all duties. 2. The like may be said of most that are weak and sickly in comparison of the strong and healthful. 3. All things affect men most deeply when they are new, and time weareth off the vigour of that Affection. The first hearing of such a fight or such a victory, or such a great man,

man, or friend dead, doth much affect us: but ſo it doth not ſtill. When you firſt receive any benefit, it more delighteth you than long after: So Married people, or any other in the firſt change of their Condition are more affected with it than afterward. And indeed mans nature cannot hold up in a conſtant elevation of Affections. Children are more taken with every thing that they ſee and hear than old men, becauſe all is new to them, and all ſeems old to the other. 4. I have told you before that ſome natures are more fiery, Paſſionate, and fervent than others are; and in ſuch a little Grace will cauſe a great deal of Earneſtneſs, Zeal and Paſſion. But let me tell you, that you may grow in theſe, and not grow in the body of your Graces. Doubtleſs Satan himſelf may do ſo much to kindle your Zeal, if he do but ſee it void of ſound Knowledge, (as he did in *James* and *John* when they would have called for Fire from Heaven, but knew not what ſpirit they were of.) For the doleful Caſe of Chriſts Churches in this age hath put quite beyond diſpute, that none do the Devils work more effectually, nor oppoſe the Kingdom of Chriſt more deſperately, than they that have the hotteſt Zeal with the weakeſt Judgements: And as Fire is moſt excellent and neceſſary in the Chimney, but in the thatch it is worſe than the vileſt dung: ſo is Zeal moſt excellent when guided by ſound Judgement; but more deſtructive than prophane ſenſuality when it is let looſe and miſguided.

On the other ſide, you may decay much in feeling and fervour of Affections, and yet grow in grace, if you do but grow in the Underſtanding and the Will. And indeed this is the Common Growth which Chriſtians have in their Age: Examine therefore whether you have this or no. Do you not underſtand

ſtand the things of the Spirit better than you formerly did? Do you not value God, Chriſt, Glory and Grace at higher rates than formerly? Are you not more fully Reſolved to ſtick to Chriſt to the death than formerly you have been? I do not think but it would be a harder work for Satan to draw you from Chriſt to the fleſh than heretofore. When the tree hath done growing in viſible greatneſs, it groweth in rootedneſs. The fruit grows firſt in bulk and quantity, and then in mellow ſweetneſs. Are not you leſs Cenſorious, and more Peaceable than heretofore? I tell you, that is a more noble growth than a great deal of auſtere and bitter, youthful, cenſorious, dividing Zeal of many will prove. Mark moſt aged experienced Chriſtians, that walk uprightly, and you will find that they quite outſtrip the younger, 1. In experience, knowledge, prudence, and ſoundneſs of Judgement. 2. In well-ſettled Reſolutions for Chriſt, his Truth and Cauſe. 3. In a Love of Peace, eſpecially in the Church, and a hatred of diſſentions, perverſe contendings and diviſions. If you can ſhew this growth, ſay not that you do not grow.

3. But ſuppoſe you do not grow, ſhould you therefore deny the ſincerity of your Grace? I would not perſwade any ſoul that they grow, when they do not. But if you do not, be humbled for it, and endeavour it for the future. Make it your deſire and daily buſineſs, and ſpare not. Lie not ſtill complaining, but rowſe up your ſoul, and ſee what's amiſs, and ſet upon neglected duties, and remove thoſe Corruptions that hinder your growth. Converſe with growing Chriſtians, and under quickning means; Endeavour the Good of other mens ſouls as well as your own: and then you'l find that growth, which will ſilence this Doubt, and do much more for you than that.

DOUBT

DOUBT XVII.

I Am troubled with ſuch Blaſphemous thoughts and Temptations to Unbelief, even againſt God, and Chriſt, and Scripture, and the Life to come, that I doubt I have no faith.

ANSWER.

TO be tempted is no ſign of graceleſneſs, but to yield to the Temptation: not every yielding neither; but to be overcome of the Temptation: Moſt Melancholy people, eſpecially that have any knowledge in Religion, are frequently haunted with Blaſphemous Temptations. I have oft wondred that the Devil ſhould have ſuch a power and advantage in the predominancy of that diſtemper. Scarce one perſon of ten, who ever was with me in deep Melancholy, either for the Cure of body or mind, but hath been haunted with theſe Blaſphemous thoughts; and that ſo impetuouſly and violently ſet on and followed, that it might appear to be from the Devil; yea even many that never ſeemed godly, or to mind any ſuch thing before. I confeſs it hath been a ſtrengthening to my own faith, to ſee the Devil ſuch an Enemy to the Chriſtian Faith; yea to the Godhead it ſelf.

But perhaps you will ſay, *It is not meer Temptation from Satan that I complain of; but it takes too much with my ſinful heart: I am ready to doubt oft-times whether there be a God, or whether his Providence determine of the things here below? or whether Scripture be true, or the Soul Immortal? &c.*

Answ. This is a very great sin, and you ought to bewail and abhor it, and in the Name of God make not light of it, but look to it betime: But yet let me tell you, that some degree of this Blasphemy and Infidelity may remain with the truest saving Faith. The best may say, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.* But I will tell you my Judgement, When your unbelief is such as to be a sign of a graceless soul in the state of damnation: *If your Doubtings of the Truth of Scripture and the Life to come, be so great that you will not let go the pleasures and profits of sin, and part with all, if God call you to it, in hope of that Glory promised, and to escape the Judgement threatned, because you look upon the things of the life to come but as uncertain things; then is your Belief no saving Belief; but your unbelief is prevalent. But if for all your staggerings, you see so much probability of the Truth of Scripture and the Life to come, that you are resolved to venture (and part with, if called to it) all worldly Hopes and Happiness for the Hope of that promised Glory, and to make it the chiefest business of your life to attain it, and do deny your self the pleasures of sin for that end; this is a true saving Faith, as is evident by its Victory; notwithstanding all the Infidelity, Atheism and Blasphemy that is mixt with it.*

But again, let me advise you to take heed of this hainous sin, and bewail and detest the very least degree of it. It is dangerous when the Devil strikes at the very root, and heart, and foundation of all your Religion. There is more sinfulness and danger in this, than in many other sins. And therefore let it never be motioned to your soul without abhorrence. Two waies the Devil hath to move it. The one is by his immediate inward suggestions; these are bad enough. The other is by his Accursed Instruments:

and

and this is a far more dangerous way: whether it be by books, or by the words of men: And yet if it be by notorious wicked men or fools, the Temptation is the leſs: but when it is by men of cunning wit, and ſmooth tongues, and hypocritical lives (for far be that wickedneſs from me, as to call them godly, or wiſe, or honeſt) then it is the greateſt ſnare that the Devil hath to lay. O juſt and Dreadful God! did I think one day that thoſe that I was then praying with, and rejoycing with, and that went up with me to the houſe of God in familiarity, would this day be blaſphemers of thy ſacred Name? and deny the Lord that bought them? and deride thy holy word as a fable? and give up themſelves to the preſent pleaſures of ſin, becauſe they believe not thy promiſed Glory! O Righteous and Merciful God! that haſt preſerved the humble from this Condemnation! and haſt permitted only the Proud and Senſual Profeſſors to fall into it! and haſt given them over to Helliſh Converſations according to the nature of their Helliſh opinions! that they might be rather a terrour to others than a ſnare! I call their Doctrine and Practice Helliſh, from its Original, becauſe it comes from the Father of Lies: but not that there is any ſuch opinion or practice in Hell. He that tempts others to deny the Godhead, the Chriſtian Faith, the Scripture, the Life to come, doth no whit doubt of any one of them himſelf, but believes and trembles. O fearful blindneſs of the Profeſſors of Religion that will hear, if not receive theſe Blaſphemies from the mouth of an Apoſtate Profeſſor, which they would abhor if it came immediately from the Devil himſelf. With what ſad complaints & trembling do poor ſinners cry out (and not without cauſe) *O I am haunted with ſuch Blaſphemous Temptations,*

that I am afraid lest God should suddenly destroy me, that ever such thoughts should come into my heart: But if an Instrument of the Devil come and plead against the Scripture of the Life to Come, or Christ himself, they will hear him with less detestation. The Devil knows that familiarity will cause us to take that from a man, which we would abhor from the Devil himself immediately. I intend not to give you now a particular preservative against each of these Temptations: Only let me tell you, that this is the direct way to Infidelity, Apostacy, and the sin against the Holy Ghost: and if by any Seducers the Devil do overcome you herein, you are lost for ever, *and then will be no more sacrifice for your sin, but a fearful expectation of judgement, and that fire which shall devour the adversaries of Christ.*

DOUBT. XVIII.

I Have so great fears of Death, and unwillingness to be with God, that I am afraid I have no Grace: for if I had Pauls *spirit, I should be able to say with him,* I desire to depart and to be with Christ: *Whereas now no news would be to me more unwelcome.*

ANSWER.

THere is a loathness to Die that comes from a Desire to do God more service; and another that comes from an Apprehension of unreadiness, when we would fain have more Assurance of Salvation first: or would be fitter to meet our Lord. Blame not a man to be somewhat backward, that know

knows it must go with him for ever in Heaven or Hell according as he is found at death. But these two be not so much *a loathness to Die*, as *a loathness to Die now, at this time.* 3. There is also in all men living, good and bad, a natural abhorrence and fear of death. God hath put this into mans nature (even in Innocency) to be his great means of Governing the World. No man would live in order, or be kept in obedience, but for this: He that cares not for his own Life, is Master of anothers. Grace doth not root out this abhorrency of Death, no more than it unmanneth us: Only it restrains it from excess, and so far overcometh the violence of the Passion, by the apprehensions of a better life beyond death, that a Believer may the more quietly and willingly submit to it. *Paul* himself desireth not Death, but the Life which followeth it; *He desireth to depart, and to be with Christ:* that is, He had rather be in Heaven than on Earth, and therefore he is contented to submit to the penal sharp passage. God doth not command you to Desire death it self; nor forbid you fearing it as an evil to nature, and a punishment of sin: Only he requireth you to desire the Blessedness to be enjoyed after death, and that so earnestly as may make death it self the easier to you. Thank God, if the fear of death be somewhat abated in you, though it be not sweetened. Men may pretend what they please, but nature will abhor death as long as it's nature, and as long as a man is man: else temporal death had been no punishment to *Adam*, if his Innocent nature had not abhorred it as it was an evil to it. Tell me but this, If Death did not stand in your way to Heaven, but that you could travel to Heaven, as easily as to *London*, would not you rather go thither, and be with Christ, than stay

in sin and vanity here on earth, so be it you were certain to be with Christ? If you can say *Yea* to this, then it is apparent that your lothness to die is either from the uncertainty of your salvation, or from the natural averseness to a dissolution, or both; and not from an unwillingness to be with Christ, or a preferring the vanities of this world before the Blessedness of that to come. Lastly, It may be God may lay that affliction on you, or use some other necessary means with you yet before you die, that may make you willinger than now you are.

DOUBT XIX.

GOD layeth upon me such heavy Afflictions, that I cannot believe he Loves me: He writeth bitter things against me, and taketh me for his enemy: I am afflicted in my health, in my name, in my children, and nearest friends, and in my state: I lived in continual poverty, or pinching distress of one kind or other: yea my very soul is filled with his terrours, and night and day is his hand heavy upon me.

ANSWER.

I Have said enough to this before; Nor do I think it needful to say any more, when the Holy Ghost hath said so much: but only to desire you to read what he hath written in *Heb.* 12. and *Job* throughout: and *Psal.* 37. and 73. And divers others. The next doubt is contrary.

DOUBT.

DOUBT. XX.

I Read in Scripture, that through many tribulations we muſt enter into Heaven; and that all that will live Godly in Chriſt Jeſus muſt ſuffer perſecution: and that he that taketh not up his Croſs, and ſo followeth Chriſt, cannot be his Diſciple: and that if we are not corrected, we are Baſtards, and not Sons: But I never had any Affliction from God, but have lived in conſtant proſperity to this day. Chriſt ſaith, Wo to you, when all men ſpeak well of you: *but all men, for ought I know, ſpeak well of me: and therefore I doubt of my ſincerity.*

ANSWER.

I Would not have mentioned this Doubt, but that I was ſo fooliſh as to be troubled with it my ſelf: and perhaps ſome others may be as fooliſh as I: though I think but few in theſe times: our great friends have *Done* ſo much to reſolve them more effectually than words could have done. 1. Some of thoſe Texts ſpeak only of mans duty of bearing perſecution and tribulation, when God laies it on us, rather than of the Event, that it ſhall certainly come. 2. Yet I think it ordinarily certain, and to be expected as to the Event: Doubtleſs Tribulation is Gods Common road to Heaven: Every ignorant perſon is ſo well ware of this, that they delude themſelves in their ſufferings, ſaying, That God hath given them their puniſhment in this life, and therefore they hope he will not puniſh them in another.

If any ſoul be ſo ſilly as to fear and doubt, for want of Affliction: if none elſe will do the Cure, let them but follow my Counſel, and I dare warrant them for this, and I will adviſe them to nothing but what is honeſt, yea and neceſſary, and what I have tried effectually upon my ſelf: and I can aſſure you, it cured me, and I can give it a *Probatum eſt*. And firſt, See that you be faithful in your Duty to all ſinners within your reach, be they great or ſmall, Gentlemen or Beggars, do your duty in Reproving them meekly and lovingly, yet plainly and ſeriouſly, telling them of the danger of Gods everlaſting wrath; and when you find them obſtinate, tell the Church-Officers of them, that they may do their duty; and if yet they are unreformed, they may be excluded from the Churches Communion, and all Chriſtian familiarity. Try this courſe a while, and if you meet with no Afflictions, and get no more fiſts about your ears than your own, nor more tongues againſt you than formerly, tell me I am miſtaken. Men baſely bawk and ſhun almoſt all the diſpleaſing ungrateful work of Chriſtianity of purpoſe, leſt they ſhould have ſufferings in the fleſh, and then they doubt of their ſincerity for want of ſufferings My ſecond Advice is, Do but ſtay a while in Patience (but prepare your Patience for a ſharper encounter) and do do not tye God to your time. He hath not told you when your Afflictions ſhall come: If he deal eaſier with you than with others, and give you a longer time to prepare for them, be not you offended at that, and do not quarrel with your mercies. It is about ſeventeen years ſince I was troubled with this doubt, thinking I was no Son, becauſe I was not afflicted; and I think I have had few daies without pain for this ſixteen years ſince together, nor but few hours, if any one, for this ſix

or

or seven years: And thus my scruple is removed.

And if yet any be troubled with this Doubt, if the Churches and Common trouble be any trouble to them, shall I be bold to tell them my thoughts? (only understand, that I pretend not to Prophesie, but to Conjecture at Effects by the position of their Moral Causes.) *I think that the Righteous King of Saints is even now, for our over-admiring rash zeal, and high profession, making for* England *so heavy an Affliction and sharp a scourge, to be inflicted by seduced, proud, self-conceited Professors, as neither we nor our Fathers did ever yet bear: Except it should prove the merciful intent of our Father, only to suffer them to ripen for their own destruction, to be a standing Monument for the effectual warning of all after-ages of the Church, Whether Pride and heady Zeal may bring Professors of holiness: And when they are full ripe, to do by them as at* Munster, *and in* New-England, *that they may go no further, but their folly may be known to all: Amen.* I have told you of my thoughts of this long ago in my Book of *Baptism*.

ALL these Doubts I have here answered, that you may see how necessary it is that in all your troubles you be sure to distinguish between Matter of Doubting, and Matter of Humiliation. Alas, what soul is so holy on the Earth, but must daily say, *Forgive us our trespasses?* and cry out with *Paul, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?* But at the same time we may thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ. If every sin should make us doubt, we should do nothing but doubt. I know you may easily tell a long and a sad story of your sins, how you are troubled with this and that, and many a distemper, and weak and wanting

ing in every Grace and Duty, and have committed many ſins: But doth it follow that therefore you have no true Grace? Learn therefore to be humbled for every ſin, but not to doubt of your ſincerity and ſalvation for every ſin.

DIRECTION XXX.

30. *Whatſoever New Doubtings do ariſe in your ſoul, ſee that you carefully diſcern whether they are ſuch as muſt be reſolved from the Conſideration of General Grace, or of ſpecial Grace; And eſpecially be ſure of this, that when you want or loſe your Certainty of Sincerity and Salvation, you have preſently recourſe to the Probability of it, and loſe not the Comforts of that; Or if you ſhould loſe the ſight of a Probability of Special Grace, yet ſee that you have recourſe at the utmoſt to General Grace, and never let go the Comforts of that at the worſt.*

THis Rule is of unſpeakable Neceſſity and uſe for your Peace and Comfort. Here are three ſeveral degrees of the grounds of Comfort. It is exceeding weakneſs for a man that is beaten from one of theſe holds, therefore to let go the other two: and becauſe he cannot have the higheſt degree, therefore to conclude that he hath none at all.

I beſeech you in all your Doubtings and Complainings, ſtill remember the two Rules here laid down. 1. All doubts ariſe not from the ſame Cauſe,

and therefore muſt not have the ſame Cure. Let the firſt thing which you do upon every doubt, be this: To conſider *Whether it come from the Unbelieving or low Apprehenſions of the general Grounds of Comfort, or from the want of evidence of ſpecial Grace?* For that which is a fit Remedy for one of theſe, will do little for the Cure of the other. 2. If your doubting be only *Whether you be ſincere in Believing, Loving, Hoping, Repenting and Obeying?* then it will not anſwer this Doubt, though you diſcern never ſo much of Gods Merciful Nature, or Chriſts Gracious Office, or the Univerſal ſufficiency of his Death and Satisfaction, or the freeneſs and extent of the Promiſe of Pardon. For I profeſs conſiderately, that I do not know in all the Body of Popery concerning Merits, Juſtification, Humane Satisfactions, Aſſurance, or any other point about Grace, for which we unchurch them, that they erre half ſo dangerouſly, as *Saltmarſh* and ſuch Antinomians do in this one point, when they ſay, That *Chriſt hath Repented and Believed for us*; meaning it of that Faith and Repentance which he hath made the conditions of our ſalvation: and that *We muſt no more queſtion our own faith, than we muſt queſtion Chriſt the Object of it.* It will be no ſaving Plea at the day of Judgement to ſay, *Though I Repented not, and Believed not, yet Chriſt died for me, or God is merciful, or Chriſt Repented and Believed for me, or God made me a free Promiſe and Gift of Salvation, if I would Repent and Believe.* What comfort would ſuch an anſwer give them? and therefore doubtleſs it will not ſerve now to quiet any knowing Chriſtian againſt thoſe Doubts that ariſe from the want of particular evidence of ſpecial Grace, though in their own place, the general Grounds of Comfort are of Abſolute Neceſſity thereto.

2. On

2. On the other side, If your Doubts arise from any defect in your Apprehensions of General Grace, it is not your looking after Marks in your self that is the way to resolve them. I told you in the beginning, that the General Grounds of Comfort lie in four particulars (that square Foundation which will bear up all the Faith of the Saints.) First, Gods Merciful and unconceivably Good and Gracious Nature, and his Love to mankind. Secondly, The Gracious Nature of the Mediatour God and Man, with his most gracious undertaken Office of Saving and Reconciling. Thirdly, The sufficiency of Christs Death and Satisfaction for all the world, to save them if they will Accept him and his Grace: I put it in terms beyond dispute, because I would not build up Believers Comforts on points which godly Divines do contradict (as little as may be:) Yet I am past all doubt my self, that Christ did actually make satisfaction to Gods Justice for All, and that no man perisheth for want of an Expiatory sacrifice, but for want of faith to believe and apply it, or for want of Repentance, and yielding to Recovering Grace. The fourth is, The universal grant of pardon, and right to salvation, on condition of Faith and Repentance. If your Doubt arise from the Ignorance or over-looking of any of these, to these must you have recourse for your Cure.

Where note, That all those Doubts which come from the greatness of your sin, as such, that you think will not therefore be forgiven, or that come from the sense of Unworthiness, (in a Legal sense) or want of Merit in your self, and all your doubts whether God be willing to accept and forgive you, though you should Repent and Believe: or whether any sacrifice was offered by Christ for your sins: I say, all these come from your Ignorance or Unbelief of

some

ſome or all of the four General Grounds here mentioned: and from them muſt be cured.

Note alſo in a ſpecial manner, That there is a great difference between theſe four General Grounds, and your particular Evidences in point of Certainty: For theſe four Corner-ſtones are faſt founded beyond all Poſſibility of Removal, ſo that they are alwaies of as undoubted Certainty as that the Heaven is over your head; and they are immutable, ſtill the ſame. Theſe you are commanded ſtrictly to Believe with a Divine Faith, as being the clearly revealed Truths of Gods; and if you ſhould not Believe them, yet they remain firm and true, and your unbelief ſhould not make void the Univerſal Promiſe and Grace of God. But your own Evidences of ſpecial Grace, are not ſo certain, ſo clear, or ſo immutable; nor are you bound to Believe them; but to ſearch after them that you may know them: You are not bound by any Word of God ſtrictly to believe that you do Believe, or Repent, but to try and diſcern it. This then is the firſt part of this Direction, That you alwaies diſcover whether your troubles ariſe from low unbelieving or ignorant thoughts of Gods Mercifulneſs, Chriſts gracious Nature and Office, general Satisfaction or the univerſal Promiſe: or whether they ariſe from want of evidence of ſincerity in your ſelf? and accordingly in your thoughts apply the Remedy.

The ſecond part of the Direction is, that you hold faſt *Probabilities* of Special Grace, when you loſe your *Certainty*, and that you hold faſt your general Grounds when you loſe both the former. Never forget this is in any of your Doubts.

You ſay, your Faith and Obedience have ſuch breaches and ſad defects in them, that you cannot be

Certain

Certain that they are sincere. Suppose it be so: Do you see no great *Likelihood* or hopes yet that they are sincere? If you do (as I think many Christians easily may, that yet receive not a proportionable comfort) remember that this is no small Mercy, but matter of great consolation.

But suppose the worst, that you *see* no Grace in your self: yet you cannot be sure you have none: For it may be there, and you not see it. Yea, suppose the worst, that you were *sure* that you had no true Grace at all, yet remember that you have still abundant cause of Comfort in Gods General Grace. Do you think you must needs despair, or give up all Hope and Comfort, or conclude your self irrecoverably lost, because you are graceless? why, be it known to you there is that ground of Consolation in general Grace that may make the hearts of the very wicked to leap for Joy. Do I need to prove that to you? You know that the Gospel is called *Glad tidings of Salvation*, and the Preachers of it are to tell those to whom they preach it, *Behold we bring you tydings of great Joy, and glad tydings to all People.* And you know before the Gospel comes to men they are miserable. If then it be glad tydings, and tydings of great joy to all the unconverted where it comes, why should it not be so to you? and where is your great joy? If you be graceless, is it nothing to know that God is exceeding merciful, *slow to anger, ready to forgive, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin*, loving mankind? Is it nothing to know that the Lord hath brought Infinite Mercy and Goodness down into humane flesh? and hath taken on him the most blessed office of Reconciling, and is become the Lamb of God? Is it nothing to you, that all your sins are a sufficient Sacrifice paid for them,

them, ſo that you are certain not to periſh for want of a Ranſom? Is it nothing to you, that God hath made ſuch an univerſal grant of Pardon and Salvation to all that will Believe? and that you are not on the terms of the meer Law of Works, to be judged for not obeying in perfection? Suppoſe you are never ſo certainly graceleſs, is it not a ground of unſpeakable Comfort, that you may be certain that *nothing can condemn you, but a flat refuſal or unwillingneſs to have Chriſt and his Salvation?* This is a certain truth, which may comfort a man as yet unſanctified, that ſin meerly as ſin ſhall not condemn him, nor any thing in the World, but the final obſtinate refuſal of the Remedy, which thereby leaveth all other ſin unpardoned.

Now I would ask you this Queſtion in your greateſt fears that you are out of Chriſt: Are you Willing to have Chriſt to pardon, ſanctifie, guide, and ſave you, or not? If you are; then you are a true Believer, and did not know it. If you are not; if you will but wait on Gods Word in Hearing, and Reading, and conſider frequently and ſeriouſly of the neceſſity and excellency of Chriſt and Glory, and the evil of ſin, and the vanity of the world, and will but beg earneſtly of God to make you Willing, you ſhall find that God hath not appointed you this means in vain, and that this way will be more profitable to you than all your complainings. See therefore when you are at the very loweſt, that you forſake not the Comforts of general Grace.

And indeed thoſe that deny any general Grace or Redemption, do leave poor Chriſtians in a very lamentable condition. For, alas, Aſſurance of ſpecial Grace (yea or a high probability) is not ſo common a thing as meer Diſputers againſt Doubting have imagined.

imagined. And when a poor Christian is beaten from his Assurance (which few have) he hath nothing but Probabilities: and when he hath no confident probable perswasion of special Grace, where is he then? and what hath he left to support his soul? I will not so fast now meddle with that controversie, as to open further how this opinion tends to leave most Christians in desperation, for all the pretences it hath found: and I had done more, but that general Redemption, or Satisfaction is commonly taught in the maintaining of the general Sufficiency of it, though men understand not how they contradict themselves.

But perhaps you will say, This is cold comfort: for I may as well argue thus, *Christ will damn sinners: I am a sinner, therefore he will damn me:* As to argue thus, *Christ will save sinners: I am a sinner, therefore he will save me.* I answer: There is no shew of soundness in either of these Arguments. It is not a *certainty* that Christ will save you, that can be gathered from general Grace alone: that must be had from assurance of special Grace superadded to the general. But a Conditional certainty you may have from general Grace only, and thus you may soundly and infallibly argue, *God hath made a Grant to every sinful man, of Pardon and Salvation through Christs Sacrifice, if they will but Repent and Believe in Christ: but I am a sinful man, therefore God hath made this Grant of Pardon and Salvation to me.*

DIRE-

DIRECTION XXXI.

31. *If God do bleſs you with an able, faithful, prudent, judicious Paſtor, take him for your Guide under Chriſt in the way to ſalvation; and open to him your Caſe, and deſire his advice in all your extraordinary preſſing neceſſities, where you have found the advice of other godly friends to be inſufficient; And this not once or twice only, but as often as ſuch preſſing neceſſities ſhall return. Or if your own Paſtor be more defective for ſuch a work, make uſe of ſome other Miniſter of Chriſt, who is more meet.*

HEre I have theſe ſeveral things to open to you. 1. That it is your Duty to ſeek this Direction from the Guides of the Church. 2. When and in what caſes you ſhould do this. 3. To what end, and how far. 4. What Miniſters they be that you ſhould chooſe thereto. 5. In what manner you muſt open your Caſe, that you may receive ſatisfaction.

1. The firſt hath two parts, 1. That you muſt open your Caſe. 2. And that to your Paſtor. 1. The Devil hath great advantage while you keep his Counſel: Two are better than one; for if one of them fall, he hath another to help him. It is dangerous Reſiſting ſuch an enemy alone. An uniting of forces oft procureth Victory. God giveth others knowledge, prudence, and other gifts for our good: that ſo every

member of the body may have need of another, and each be uſefull to the other. An Independency of Chriſtian upon Chriſtian, is moſt unchriſtian; much more of people on their Guides. It ceaſeth to be a Member, which is ſeparated from the body: and to make no uſe of the body or fellow members, is next to ſeparation from them. Sometime baſhfulneſs is the cauſe, ſometimes ſelf-confidence (a far worſe cauſe;) but whatever is the cauſe of Chriſtians ſmothering their Doubts, the effects are oft ſad. The diſeaſe is oft gone ſo far, that the Cure is very difficult, before ſome baſhful, or proud, or tender Patients will open their diſeaſe. The very opening of a mans grief to a faithful friend, doth oft eaſe the heart of it ſelf. 2. And that this ſhould be done to your Paſtor, I will ſhew you further anon.

2. But you muſt underſtand well *when* this is your Duty. 1. Not in every ſmall infirmity, which accompanies Chriſtians in their daily moſt watchfull Converſation: Nor yet in every leſſer Doubt, which may be otherwaies reſolved. It is a folly and a wrong to Phyſitians to run to them for every cut finger or prick with a pin. Every neighbour can help you in this. 2. Nor except it be a weighty caſe indeed, go not firſt to a Miniſter. But firſt ſtudy the caſe your ſelf, and ſeek Gods Direction: If that will not ſerve, open your caſe to your neareſt boſome friend that is godly and judicious. And in theſe two caſes alwaies go to your Paſtor: 1. In caſe privater means can do you no good: then God calls you to ſeek further. If a cut finger ſo feſter that ordinary means will not cure it, you muſt go to the Phyſician. 2. If the caſe be weighty and dangerous: For then none but the more prudent advice is to be truſted. If you be ſtruck with a dangerous diſeaſe, I would not have you delay ſo long,

long, nor wrong your ſelf ſo much as to ſtay while you tamper with every womans medicine, but go preſently to the Phyſician. So if you either fall into any grievous ſin, or any terrible pangs of Conſcience, or any great ſtreights and difficulties about matters of Doctrine or Practice, go preſently to your Paſtor for advice. The Devil and Pride, and Baſhfulneſs will do their utmoſt to hinder you; but ſee that they prevail not.

3. Next conſider to what End you muſt do this. Not 1. Either to expect that a Miniſter can of himſelf create Peace in you: or that all your Doubts ſhould vaniſh as ſoon as ever you have opened your mind. Only the great Peacemaker, the Prince of Peace, can create Peace in you: Aſcribe not to any the Office of the Holy Ghoſt, to be your effectual Comforter. To expect more from man than belongs to man, is the way to receive nothing from him, but to cauſe God to blaſt to you the beſt endeavours. 2. Nor muſt you reſolve to take all meerly from the word of your Paſtor, as if he were infallible: Nor abſolutely to Judge of your ſelf as he Judgeth. For he may be too rigorous, or more commonly too charitable in his opinion of you: There may be much of your diſpoſition and converſation unknown to him, which may hinder his right Judging. But 1. You muſt uſe your Paſtor as the ordained Inſtrument and Meſſenger of the Lord Jeſus and his Spirit, appointed to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to the weary, and to ſhew to man his Righteouſneſs, and to ſtrengthen the weak hands and feeble knees, yea and more, to bind and looſe on Earth, as Chriſt doth bind and looſe in Heaven. As Chriſt and his Spirit do only ſave in the principal place, and yet Miniſters ſave ſouls in ſubordination to them as his Inſtruments, *Act.* 26 17, 18. 1 *Tim.* 4. 15. 16.

Jam. 5. 20. So Christ and the Spirit are as Principal Causes the only Comforters: but his Ministers are Comforters under him. 2. And that which you must expect from them is these two things. 1. You must expect those fuller discoveries of Gods Will, than you are able to make your self, by which you may have assurance of your duty to God, and of the sense of Scripture, which expresseth how God will deal with you: That so a clearer discovery of Gods mind may Resolve your Doubts. 2. In the mean time till you can come to a full Resolution, you may and must somewhat stay your self on the very Judgement of your Pastor: Not as infallible, but as a discovery of the Probability of your good or bad estate: and so of your duty also. Though you will not renounce your own understanding, and believe any man when you know he is deceived, or would deceive you, yet you will so far suspect your own reason, and value anothers, as to have a special regard to every mans Judgement in his own Profession. If the Physician tell you that your disease is not dangerous, or the Lawyer that your Cause is good, it will more Comfort you than if another man should say as much. It may much stay your heart till you can reach to clear Evidences and Assurance, to have a Pastor that is well acquainted with you, and is faithfull and Judicious to tell you that he verily thinks that you are in a safe Condition. 3. But the chief use of his advice is, not so much to tell you what he thinks of you, as to give you Directions how you may Judge of your self, and come out of your trouble: Besides the benefit of his Prayers to God for you.

4. Next let me tell you what men you must choose to open your mind to: And they must be, 1. Men of

Judgement

Judgement and Knowledge, and not the ignorant, be they never ſo honeſt: Elſe they may deceive you, not knowing what they do: either for want of underſtanding the Scripture, and the nature of Grace and Sin; or for want of skill to deal with both weak Conſciences, and deep deceitful hearts. 2. They muſt be truly fearing God, and of experience in this great work. For a troubled ſoul is ſeldom well reſolved and comforted meerly out of a Book, but from the Book and Experience both together. Carnal or formal men will but make a Jeſt at the Doubts of a troubled Chriſtian; or at leaſt will give you ſuch formal Remedies as will prove no Cure: Either they will perſwade you, as the Antinomians do, that you ſhould truſt God with your ſoul, and never Queſtion your Faith: Or that you do ill to trouble your ſelf about ſuch things: Or they will direct you only to the Comforts of General Grace, and tell you only that God is Merciful, and Chriſt died for ſinners: which are the neceſſary Foundations of our Peace; but will not anſwer particular Doubts of our own ſincerity, and of our Intereſt in Chriſt: Or elſe they will make you believe that Holineſs of heart and life (which is the thing you look after) is it that troubleth you, and breeds all your ſcruples. Or elſe with the Papiſts, they will ſend you to your Merits for Comfort; or to ſome Vindictive Penance in Faſtings, Pilgrimages, or the like; or to ſome Saint departed, or Angel, or to the Pardons or Indulgences of the Pope: or to a certain formal, carnal Devotion, to make God amends. 3. They muſt be men of downright Faithfulneſs, that will deal plainly and freely, though not cruelly: and not like thoſe tender Surgeons that will leave the cure undone for fear of hurting: Meddle not with men-pleaſers and daubers, that will preſently ſpeak

Comfort to you as confidently as if they had known you twenty years, when perhaps they know little of your Heart or Case. Deal not with such as Resolve to humour you. 4. They must be men of fidelity, and well tried to be such, that you must trust them with those secrets which you are called to Reveal. 5. They must be men of great staidness and wisdom, that they may neither rashly pass their Judgement, nor set you upon unsound, unwarrantable or dangerous Courses. 6. It is suspicious if they be men that are so Impudent as to draw out your secrets, and screw themselves deeper into your privatest thoughts and waies than is meet: Yet a compassionate Minister, when he seeth that poor Christians do endanger themselves by keeping secret their troubles, or else that they hazard themselves by hiding the greatest of their sins, like *Acan*, *Saul*, or *Ananias* and *Sophira*, and so play the Hypocrites; in these Cases he may and must urge them to deal openly. 7. Above all be sure that those that you seek advice of be sound in the Faith, and free from the two desperate plagues of notorious false doctrine, and separating dividing inclinations, that do but hunt about to make Disciples to themselves. There are two of the former sort, and three of the latter, that I would charge you to take heed of (and yet all is but four.) 1. Among those that err from the Faith (next to *Pagans*, *Jews* and *Infidels*, whether Ranters, Seekers or Socinians, which I think few sober, godly men are so much in danger of, because of their extream vileness) I would especially have you avoid the Antinomians, being the greatest pretenders to the right comforting afflicted Consciences in the world: but upon my certain knowledge I dare say they are notorious subverters of the very nature of the Gospel, and that free Grace which they so

ſo much talk of, and the great diſhonourers of the Lord Jeſus, whom they ſeem ſo highly to extoll. They are thoſe Mountebanks and Quackſalvers that delude the world by vain oſtentation, and Kill more than they will Cure. 2. Next to them, take heed of the Papiſts, who will go to *Rome*, to Saints, to Angels, to Merits, to the moſt carnal deluſory means for Comfort, when they ſhould go to Scripture and to Heaven for it.

And then take heed that you fall not into the hands of ſeparating dividers of Chriſts Church. The moſt notorious and dangerous of them are of theſe three ſorts: 1. The laſt mentioned, the Papiſts: They are the moſt notorious Schiſmaticks and Separatiſts that ever Gods Church did know on Earth: For my part, I think their Schiſm is more dangerous and wicked than the reſt of their falſe Doctrine. The unmerciful, proud, ſelf-ſeeking wretches would like the Donatiſts make us believe that God hath no true Church on Earth but they: and that all the Chriſtians in *Ethiopia*, *Aſia*, *Germany*, *Hungary*, *France*, *England*, *Scotland*, *Ireland*, *Belgia*, and the reſt of the World that acknowledge not their Pope of *Rome* to be Head of all the Churches in the World, are none of Chriſts Churches, nor ever were. Thus do they ſeparate from all the Churches on Earth, and confine all Religion and Salvation to themſelves, who ſo notoriouſly depart from Chriſts way of Salvation. Indeed the extream diligence that they uſe in viſiting the ſick, and ſoliciting all men to their Church and way, is plainly to get themſelves followers; and they are every where more induſtrious to enlarge the Popes Kingdom, than Chriſts. So far are they from ſtudying the Unity of the Catholick Church, which they ſo much talk of, that they will admit none to be of

that Church, not to be saved, but their own party, as if indeed the Pope had the Keys of Heaven. Indeed they are the most Impudent Sectaries and Schismaticks on Earth. 2. The next to them are the Anabaptists, whose Doctrine is not in it self so dangerous as their Schism and gathering Disciples so zealously to themselves: And so strange a curse of God hath followed them hitherto, as may deter any sober Christian from rash adventuring on their way. Even now when they are higher in the world than ever they were on earth, yet do the judicious see Gods heavy judgement upon them, in their Congregations and Conversations. 3. Lastly, Meddle not with those commonly called Separatists; for they will make a prey of you for the increase of their party. I do not mean that you should separate from these two last, as they do from us, and have nothing to do with them, nor acknowledge them Christians. But seek not their advice, and make them not of your counsel. You will do as one that goes to a Physician that hath the Plague, to be cured of a cut finger, if you go for your comfort to any of these Seducers. But if you have a Pastor that is sound in the main Doctrines of Religion, and is studious of the Unity and Peace of the Church, such a man you may use, though in many things mistaken; for he will not seek to make a Prey of you by drawing you to his party; Let him be Lutheran, Calvinist, Arminian, Episcopal, Independant, or Presbyterian, so he be sound in the main, and free from Division. Thus I have shewed you the Qualifications of these men that you must seek advice of.

2. Let me next add this: Let them be rather Pastors than private men, if it may be: And rather your own Pastors than others, if they are fit. For the first consider, 1. It is their Office to be Guides of Christs Disciples

Diſciples under him, and to be ſpiritual Phyſicians for the curing of ſouls. And experience telleth us (and ſadly of late) what a curſe followeth thoſe that ſtep beyond the bounds of their Calling by invading this Office, and that God bleſſeth means to them that keep within his order, 1 *Theſſ.*5.12,13. *Heb.*13.7,17. Not but that private men may help you in this, as a private neighbour may give you a Medicine to cure your diſeaſe; but you will not ſo ſoon truſt them in any weighty caſe as you will the Phyſician. 2. Beſides Miniſters have made it the ſtudy of their lives, and therefore are liker to underſtand it than others. As for thoſe that think long ſtudy no more conducible to the knowledge of Scriptures, than if men ſtudied not at all, they may as well renounce Reaſon, and Diſpute for preheminency of beaſts above men, as renounce ſtudy, which is but the uſe of Reaſon. But it appears how conſiderately theſe men ſpeak themſelves, and whence it comes, and how much credit a ſober Chriſtian ſhould give them! Let them Read, *Pſal.* 1. 2, 3. *Heb.* 5. 11, 12, 13, 14. 1 *Tim.*4.13,14,15,16. And 2 *Tim.*2.15. And let them return to their wits. *Paul* commands *Timothy*, though he was from his youth acquainted with the Scriptures, *Meditate upon theſe things: Give thy ſelf wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all*: How much need have we to do ſo now? 3. Alſo Miniſters are uſually moſt *experienced* in this work: and wiſdom requires you no more to truſt your ſoul, than you would do your body with an unexperienced man.

2. And if it may be (he being fit) let it be rather your own Paſtor than another: 1. Becauſe it belongeth to his peculiar place and charge, to direct the ſouls of his own Congregation. 2. Becauſe he is likelier to know you, and to fit his advice to your eſtate,

eſtate, as having better opportunity than others to be acquainted with your converſation.

5. Next conſider, in what manner you muſt open your Grief, if you would have Cure. 1. Do it as truly as you can. Make the matter neither better nor worſe than it is. Specially take heed of dealing like *Ananias*; pretending to open all (as he did to Give all) when you do but open ſome common infirmities, and hide all the moſt diſgraceful diſtempers of your heart, and ſins of your life. The Vomit of Confeſſion muſt work to the bottom, and fetch up that hidden ſin, which is it that continueth your Calamity. Read Mr. *T. Hooker* in his *Souls Preparation*, concerning this Confeſſion; who ſhews you the danger of not going to the bottom.

2. You muſt not go to a Miniſter to be cured meerly by good words, as Wizzards do by charms; and ſo think that all is well when he hath ſpoken comfortably to you: But you muſt go for Directions for your own Practice, that ſo the cure may be done by leaſure when you come home. Truly moſt even of the godly that I have known, do go to a Miniſter for comfort, as filly people go to a Phyſician for Phyſick. If the Phyſician could ſtroak them whole, or give them a penny worth of ſome pleaſant ſtuff, that would cure all in an hour, then they would praiſe him. But alas, the cure will not be done. 1. Without coſt. 2. Nor without time and patience. 3. Nor without taking down unpleaſing medicines: and ſo they let all alone. So you come to a Miniſter for advice and comfort; and you look that his words ſhould comfort you before he leaves you, or at leaſt, ſome ſhort ſmall direction to take home with you: But he tells you, if you will be cured you muſt more Reſolve againſt that diſquieting Corruption and Paſſion;

Paſſion; you muſt more meekly ſubmit to Reproof: you muſt walk more watchfully and conſcionably with God and men; and then you muſt not give ear to the tempter, with many the like; he gives you, as I have done here, a bill of thirty ſeveral Directions, and tells you, you muſt practiſe all theſe; O this ſeems a tedious courſe; You are never the nearer comfort for hearing theſe; it muſt be by long and diligent practiſing them. Is it not a fooliſh Patient that will come home from the Phyſician, and ſay, *I have heard all that he ſaid: but I am never the better?* So you ſay, *I have heard all that the Miniſter ſaid: and I have never the more comfort.* But have you *Done* all that he bade you? and *Taken* all the Midicines that he gave you? Alas, the cure is moſt to be done by your ſelf (under Chriſt) when you come home: The Miniſter is but the Phyſician to direct you what courſe to take for the cure. And then, as ſilly People run from one Phyſician to another, hearing what all can ſay, and deſirous to know what every man thinks of them, but throughly follow the advice of none, but perhaps take one medicine from one man, and one from another, and let moſt even of thoſe lie by them in the box, and ſo periſh more certainly than if they never medled with any at all: ſo do moſt troubled ſouls, hear what one man ſaith, and what another ſaith, and ſeldom throughly follow the advice of any: but when one mans words do not cure them, they ſay, This is not the man that God hath appointed to cure me: And ſo another, and that is not the man: When they ſhould rather ſay, *This is not the way*, than *This is not the man.* This lazy complaining is not it that will do the work; but faithfull practiſing the Directions given you.

But

But I know some will say, *That it is near to Popish Auricular Confession which I here perswade Christians to, and it is to bring Christians under the Tyranny of the Priests again, and make them acquainted with all mens secrets, and Masters of their Consciences.*

Answ. 1. To the last, I say, to the railing Devil of this age, no more but, *The Lord Rebuke thee.* If any Minister have wicked ends, let the God of heaven convert him, or root him out of his Church, and cast him among the weeds and briers. But is it not the known voice of sensuality and Hell, to cast reproaches upon the Way and Ordinances of God? who knoweth not that it is the very Office of the Ministry, to be Teachers and Guides to men in matters of salvation? and Overseers of them? and *that they watch for their souls, as those that must give an account?* and the people therefore bound to obey them? *Heb.* 13. 7, 17. Should not the shepherd know his sheep, and their strayings and diseases? How else shall he cure them? should not the Physician hear the Patient open all his disease, yea study to discover to the utmost every thing he knows; and all little enough to the cure? A disease unknown is unlike to be cured: and a disease well known is half cured. Mr, *Tho. Hooker* saith truly, It is with many people as with some over-modest Patients, who haveing a disease in some secret place, they will not for shame reveal it to the Physician, till it be past cure, and then they must lose their lives by their modesty: So do many by their secret and more disgracefull sins. Not that every man is bound to open all his sins to his Pastor: but those that cannot well be otherwise cured, he must: either if the sense of the guilt cannot be removed, and true Assurance of pardon obtained: or else, if power against the sin be

not

not otherwiſe obtained, but that it ſtill prevaileth: In both theſe caſes we muſt go to thoſe that God hath made our Directors and Guides; I am confident many a thouſand ſouls do long ſtrive againſt Anger, Luſt, Fleſh-pleaſing, Worldlineſs and trouble of Conſcience to little purpoſe, who if they would but have taken Gods way, and ſought out for help, and opened all their Caſe to their Miniſter, they might have been delivered in a good meaſure long ago. 2. And for Popiſh confeſſion, I deteſt it: We would not perſwade men that there is a neceſſity of confeſſing every ſin to a Miniſter before it can be pardoned. Nor do we do it in a perplexed formality only at one time of the year: nor in order to Popiſh pardons, or Satisfactions: But we would have men go for Phyſick to their ſouls, as they do for their bodies; when they feel they have need; And let me adviſe all Chriſtian Congregations to practiſe this excellent duty more. See that you knock oftner at your Paſtors door, and ask his advice in all your preſſing neceſſities: Do not let him ſit quiet in his ſtudy for you: Make him know by experience that the tenth part of a Miniſters labour is not in the Pulpit. If your ſins are ſtrong, and you have wounded Conſcience deep, go for his advice for a ſafe cure: many a mans ſore feſters to damnation for want of this: And poor ignorant and ſcandalous ſinners have far more need to do this than troubled Conſciences. I am confident, if the people of my Congregation did but do their duty for the good of their own ſouls in private, ſeeking advice of their Miniſters, and opening their caſes to them, they would find work for ten Miniſters at leaſt: And yet thoſe two that they have, have more work than they are able to do already. Eſpecially Miniſters in ſmall Countrey Congregations, might do abundance of Good this way:

way: And their people are much to blame that they come not oftner to them for advice: This were the way to make Christians indeed. The Devil knows this, and therefore so envies it, that he never did more against a design in the world; he hath got the maintenance alienated that should have maintained them, that so they may have but one Minister in a Congregation, and then among the greater Congregations this work is impossible for want of Instruments: yea he is about getting down the very Churches and setled Ministry, if God will suffer him. He setteth his Instruments to rail at Priests and Discipline, and to call Christs yoke Tyranny; because while the Garden is hedged in, he is fain with envy to look over the hedge. What if a man (like those of our times) should come to a Town that have an Epidemical Plurisie or Feaver, and say, '*Do not run like fools to these Physicians; they do but cheat you, and rob your purses, and seek themselves, and seek to be Lords of your lives.* Its possible some do so: But if by these perswasions the silly people should lose their lives, how well had their new Preacher befriended them? such friends will those prove at last to your souls, that disswade you from obeying the Guidance and Discipline of your Over-seers, and dare call the Ordinances of the Lord of Glory Tyrannical, and reproach those that Christ hath set over them. *England* will not have Christ by his Officers Rule over them; nor the several Congregations will not obey him. But he will make them know before many years are past, that they refused their own mercy; and knew not the things that belong to their Peace; and that he will be Master at last in spight of Malice, and the proudest of his foes. If they get by this bargain of Refusing Christs government, and Despising his Ministers, and making

making the Peace, Unity and Proſperity of his Church, and the ſouls of men, a Prey to their Proud miſguided Phanſies and Paſſions, then let them boaſt of the bargain when they have tryed it. Only I would intreat one thing of them, Not to Judge too confidently till they have ſeen the end.

And for all you tender Conſcienc'd Chriſtians, whom by the Miniſtry the Lord hath begotten or confirmed to himſelf, as ever you will ſhew your ſelves thankful for ſo great a mercy, as ever you will hold that you have got, or grow to more perfection, and attain that bleſſed Life to which Chriſt hath given you his Miniſters to conduct you, ſee that you ſtick cloſe to a judicious, godly, faithful Miniſtry, and make uſe of them while you have them. Have you ſtrong luſts, or deep wounds in conſcience, or a heavy burthen of doubtings or diſtreſs? ſeek their advice, God will have his own Ordinance and Officers have the chief inſtrumental hand in your cure. The ſame means oft times in another hand ſhall not do it. Yet I would have you make uſe of all able private Chriſtians help alſo.

I will tell you the reaſon why our Miniſters have not urged this ſo much upon you, nor ſo plainly acquainted their Congregations with the neceſſity of opening your caſe to your Miniſter, and ſeeking his advice.

1. Some in oppoſition to Popery have gone too far on the other extream; perhaps ſinning as deeply in neglect, as the Papiſts do in formal exceſs. It is a good ſign that an opinion is true, when it is near to errour. For truth is the very next ſtep to error. The ſmall thred of Truth, runs between the cloſe adjoyning extreams of errour.

2. Some Miniſters knowing the exceeding greatneſs

nesse of the burthen, are loth to put themselves upon it. This one Work of giving advice to all that ought to come and open their case to us, if our people did but what they ought to do for their own safety, would it self, in great congregations, be more than preaching every day in the week. What then is all the rest of the Work? And how can one man, yea or five, do this to five thousand souls? And then when it lyeth undone, the malicious Reproachers rail at the Ministers, and accuse the people of unfitness to be Church-members; which howsoever there may be some cause of, yet not so much as they suggest; and that unfitness would best be cured by the diligence of more Labourers, which they think to cure by removing the few that do remain.

3. Also some Ministers seeing that they have more work than they can do already, think themselves uncapable of more, and therefore that it's vain to put their people on it, to seek more.

4. Some Ministers are over-modest, and think it to be unfit to desire people to open their secrets to them; in confessing their sins and corrupt inclinations, and opening their wants: And indeed any ingenuous man will be backward to pry into the secrets of others. But when God hath made it our office under Christ to be Physitians to the souls of our People, it is but bloody cruelty to connive at their Pride and Carnal Bashfulness, or Hypocritical Covering of their sins, and to let them dye of their disease rather than we will urge them to disclose it.

5. Some Ministers are loth to tell People of their duty in this, lest it should confirm the world in their malicious conceit, that we should be Masters of Mens Consciences, and would Lord it over them. This is as much folly and cruelty, as if the Master

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and Pilot of the Ship ſhould let the Mariners govern the Ship by the Major Vote, and run all on ſhelves, and drown themſelves and him, and all for fear of being thought Lordly and Tyrannical in taking the government of the Ship upon himſelf, and telling the Mariners that it is their duty to obey him.

6. Moſt godly Miniſters do tell people in general of the neceſſity of ſuch a Dependance on their Teachers, as Learners in the School of Chriſt ſhould have on them that are Uſhers under him the chief Maſter: and they do gladly give advice to thoſe that do ſeek to them: But they do not ſo particularly and plainly acquaint people with their duty, in opening to them the particular ſores of their ſouls.

It is alſo the policy of the Devil to make people believe that their Miniſters are too ſtout, and will not ſtoop to a compaſſionate hearing of their caſe: eſpecially if Miniſters carry themſelves ſtrangely at too great a diſtance from their people. I would earneſtly intreat all Miniſters therefore to be as familiar, and as much with their people as they can. Papiſts and other Seducers will inſinuate themſelves into their familiarity, if we be ſtrange: If you teach them not in their houſes, theſe will creep into their houſes, and lead them captive. I perſwade others of my Brethren to that which my ſelf am diſabled from performing; being by conſtant weakneſs (beſides unavoidable buſineſs) confined to my Chamber. But thoſe that can perform it, will find this a moſt neceſſary and profitable work. And let not poor people believe the Devil, who tells them that Miniſters are ſo proud, only to diſcourage them from ſeeking their advice. Go try them once before you believe it.

Laſtly, Remember this, that it is not enough that you once opened your caſe to your Paſtor; but do it as often as Neceſſity urgeth you to call for his advice: though not on every light occaſion. Live in ſuch a Dependance on the advice and guidance of your Paſtor (under Chriſt) for your ſoul, as you do on the advice of the Phyſician for your body. Read *Mal.* 2. 7. And let Miniſters read, 6, 7, 9.

DIRECTION XXXII.

32. As ever you would live in Peace and Comfort, and well-pleaſing unto God, be ſure that you underſtand, and deeply conſider wherein the height of a Chriſtian life, and the greateſt part of our Duty doth conſiſt; To wit, *In a loving Delight in God, and a Thankfull and Chearfull Obedience to his Will; And then make this your conſtant aim, and be ſtill aſpiring after it, and let all other affections and endeavours be ſubſervient unto this.*

THis one Rule well practiſed, would do wonders on the ſouls of poor Chriſtians, in diſpelling all their fears and troubles, and helping not only to a ſettled Peace, but to live in the moſt comfortable ſtate that can be expected upon earth. Write therefore theſe two or three words deep in your underſtandings and memory; that the life which God is beſt pleaſed with, and we ſhould be alwaies endeavouring, is, *A loving Delight in God through Chriſt; and a thankful*

thankfull and chearfull obedience to him. I do not ſay, that godly ſorrows, and fears, and jealouſies, are no Duties: but theſe are the great Duties, to which the reſt ſhould all ſubſerve. Miſapprehending the ſtate of Duty, and the very Nature of a Chriſtian life, muſt needs make ſad diſtempers in mens hearts and converſations. Many Chriſtians look upon Broken-heartedneſs, and much grieving and weeping for ſin, as if it were the great thing that God Delighteth in, and requireth of them: and therefore they bend all their endeavours this way; and are ſtill ſtriving with their hearts to break them more, and wringing their conſciences to ſqueeze out ſome tears; and they think no Sermon, no Prayer, no Meditation ſpeeds ſo well with them, as that which can help them to grieve or weep. I am far from perſwading men againſt Humiliation, and godly ſorrow, and tenderneſs of heart: But yet I muſt tell you, that this is a ſore errour that you lay ſo much upon it, and ſo much overlook that great and noble work and ſtate to which it tendeth. Do you think that God hath any pleaſure in your ſorrows as ſuch? Doth it do him good to ſee you dejected, afflicted and tormented? Alas, it is only as your ſorrows do kill your ſins, and mortifie your fleſhly luſts, and prepare for your Peace and Joyes, that God regards them: Becauſe God doth ſpeak comfortably to troubled drooping ſpirits, and tells them, that he delighteth in the contrite, and loveth the humble, and bindeth up the broken-hearted; therefore men miſ-underſtanding him, do think they ſhould do nothing, but be ſtill breaking their own hearts: Whereas God ſpeaks it but partly to ſhew his hatred to the proud, and partly to ſhew his tender compaſſions to the humbled, that they might not be overwhelmed or deſpair. But, O

Christians, understand and consider, that all your sorrows are but preparatives to your Joyes: and that it is a higher and sweeter work that God calls you to, and would have you spend your time and strength in. 1. The first part of it is *Love*. A work that is wages to it self. He that knows what it is to live in the Love of God, doth know that Christianity is no tormenting and discontented life. 2. The next part is, *Delight in God, and in the hopes and fore-thoughts of ever-lasting Glory*, Psal. 37. 4. *Delight thy self in the Lord, and he shall give thee the Desires of thy heart*: This is it that you should be bending your studies and endeavours for, that your soul might be able to delight it self in God. 3. The third part is Thankfulness and Praise. Though I say not as some, that we should be moved by no fears or desires of the Reward (that is, of God) but act only from Thankfulness (as though we had all that we expect already) yet let me desire you to take special notice of this Truth; that *Thankfulness must be the main principle of all Gospel-Obedience*: And this is not only true of the Regenerate after Faith; but even the wicked themselves who are called to Repent and Believe, are called to do it *in a glad and thankful sense of the Mercy offered them in Christ*. All the world being fallen under Gods wrath and deserved condemnation, and the Lord Jesus having become a Sacrifice and Ransom for all, and so brought all from that Legal Necessity of perishing which they were under, the Gospel which brings them the News of this, is glad tidings of great Joy to them, and the very justifying act which they are called to, is, *Thankfully to Accept Christ as one that hath already satisfied for their sins, and will save them, if they Accept him, and will follow his saving Counsel, and use his saving means*;

and

and the saving work which they must proceed in, is *Thankfully to obey that Redeemer whom they Believe in.* So that as general Redemption is the very Foundation of the new world and its government, so Thankfulness for this Redemption is the very life of Justifying Faith, and Gospel Obedience. And therefore the denial of this universal Redemption (as to the Price and Satisfaction) doth both disable wicked men (if they receive it) from coming to Christ by true Justifying Faith (which is, The Thankful Acceptance of Christ as he is offered with his benefits;) and this Thankfulness must be for what he *hath done* in dying for us, as well as for what he *will do* in pardoning and saving us, and it doth disable all true Believers from Gospel grateful Obedience, when ever they lose the sight of their Evidences of special Grace (which, alas, how ordinary is it with them!) For when they cannot have special Grace in their eye to be thankful for, according to this Doctrine they must have none; because they can be no surer that Christ died for them, than they are that themselves are sincere Believers and truly sanctified. And when Thankfulness for Christs Death and Redemption ceaseth, Gospel obedience ceaseth, and Legal and slavish terrours do take place: Though the same cannot be said of Thankfulness for special renewing, pardoning grace.

4. The fourth part of the Christian Life is *Chearfull Obedience.* God loveth a chearful giver, and so he doth in every part of obedience, *Deut.* 28. 47. *Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with Joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things, thou shalt serve thy enemies in hunger and thirst, &c.*

Will you now lay all this together, and make it for the time to come your business? and try whether

it will not be the trueſt way to comfort? and make your life a bleſſed life? will you make it your end in hearing, reading, praying and Meditation to raiſe your ſoul to delight in God? Will you ſtrive as much to work it to this delight as ever you did to work it to ſorrow? Certainly you have more reaſon: and certainly there is more matter of delight in the face and Love of God, than in all the things in the world beſides. Conſider but the Scripture Commands, and then lay to heart your duty, *Phil.* 4. 4. *Rejoyce in the Lord alway, and again I ſay Rejoyce*, Phil. 3. 1. Zech. 10. 7. Joel 2. 23. Iſa. 41. 16. Pſal. 33. 1. *Rejoyce in the Lord O ye Righteous, for praiſe is comely for the upright*, Pſal. 97. 12. 1 Theſſ. 5. 16. *Rejoyce evermore*, 1 Pet. 1. 6, 8. Rom. 5. 2. John 4. 36. Pſal. 5. 11. & 33. 21. & 35. 9. & 66. 6. & 68. 3, 4. 71. 23. & 89. 16. & 105. 3. & 149. 2. & 43. 4. & 27. 6. John 16. 24. Rom. 15. 13. & 14. 17. *The Kingdom of God is in Righteouſneſs, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, Gal. 5. 22. Pſal. 32. 11. *Be glad in the Lord, and Rejoyce O ye Righteous, and ſhout for joy all ye that are upright in heart*, Pſal. 132. 9, 16. & 5. 11. & 35. 27. Hab. 3. 18. With a hundred more the like. Have you made conſcience of this great duty according to its excellency and theſe preſſing Commands of God? Have you made conſcience of the duties of Praiſe, Thankſgiving and Chearfull Obedience, as much as for Grieving for ſin? perhaps you will ſay, *I cannot do it for want of Aſſurance: If I knew that I were one of the Righteous, and upright in Heart, then I could be glad, and ſhout for joy. Anſw.* 1. I have before ſhewed you how you may know that; when you diſcover it in your ſelf, ſee that you make more conſcience of this duty.

duty. 2. You have had hopes and probabilities of your ſincerity: Did you endeavour to anſwer thoſe probabilities in your Joyes? 3. If you would but labour to get this delight in God, it would help you to Aſſurance: for it would be one of your cleareſt Evidences.

O how the ſubtil enemy diſadvantageth the Goſpel, by the miſapprehenſions and dejected ſpirits of Believers! It is the very deſign of the ever-bleſſed God, to glorifie Love and Mercy as highly in the Work of Redemption, as ever he glorified Omnipotency in the Work of Creation: And he hath purpoſely unhinged the Sabbath which was appointed to Commemorate that work of Power in Creation, to the firſt day of the week, *That it might be ſpent as a weekly day of Thanksgiving and Praiſe for the now more Glorious work of Redemption, that Love might not only be equally admired with Power, but even go before it.* So that he hath laid the foundation of the Kingdom of Grace in Love and Mercy; and in Love and Mercy hath he framed the whole Structure of the Edifice: and Love and Mercy are written in legible indelible Characters upon every piece: And the whole frame of his Work and Temple-ſervice, hath he ſo compoſed, that all might be the reſounding Eccho's of Love; and the Praiſe and glorious Commemoration of Love and Mercy might be the great buſineſs of our ſolemn Aſſemblies: And the new Creation within us, and without us, is ſo ordered, that Love, Thankfulneſs and Delight, might be both the way and the end. And the Serpent who moſt oppoſeth God where he ſeeketh moſt glory, eſpecially the glory of his grace, doth labour ſo ſucceſsfully to obſcure this glory, that he hath brought multitudes of poor Chriſtians to have

poor low thoughts of the Riches of this Grace: and to ſet every ſin of theirs againſt it, which ſhould but advance it: and even to queſtion the very foundation of the whole building, whether Chriſt hath Redeemed the World by his Sacrifice? yea he puts ſuch a vail over the glory of the Goſpel, that men can hardly be brought to receive it as glad tidings, till they firſt have Aſſurance of their own Sanctification! And the very nature of Gods Kingdom is ſo unknown, that ſome men think it to be Unrighteouſneſs, and Libertiniſm, and others to be Penſive Dejections, and Tormenting ſcruples and fears; and but few know it to be Righteouſneſs and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt: And the very buſineſs of a Chriſtians life and Gods ſervice, is rather taken to be ſcrupling, quarrelling and vexing our ſelves and the Church of God, than to be Love and Gratitude, and a delighting our ſouls in God, and chearfully obeying him. And thus when Chriſtianity ſeems a thraldom and torment: and the ſervice of the world, the fleſh and the Devil, ſeems the only freedom, and quiet, and delight, no wonder if the Devil have more unfeigned ſervants than Chriſt; and if men tremble at the Name of Holineſs, and fly away from Religion as a Miſchief. What can be more contrary to its nature, and to Gods deſign in forming it, than for the Profeſſors to live ſuch dejected and dolorous lives? God calls men from vexation and vanity, to high delights and peace, And men come to God as from peace and pleaſure to vexation. All our preaching will do little to win ſouls from Senſuality to Holineſs, while they look upon the ſad lives of the profeſſors of Holineſs; As it will more deter a ſick man from medling with a Phyſician, to ſee all that he hath had in hand to lie lan-

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guiſhing in continual pains to their death, than all his words and promiſes will encourage them. O what bleſſed lives might Gods people live, if they underſtood the Love of God in the myſterie of mans Redemption, and did addict themſelves to the conſideration and improvement of it, and did believingly eye the promiſed Glory, and hereupon did make it the buſineſs of their lives to delight their ſouls in him that hath loved them! And what a wonderful ſucceſs might we expect to our preaching, if the Holy Delights and Chearful Obedience of the Saints did preach as clearly to the eyes of the world, as we preach loudly to their ears?

But fleſh will be fleſh yet a while! and unbelief will be unbelief! we are all to blame! The Lord forgive our over-looking his loving kindneſs; and our diſhonouring the glorious Goſpel of his Son; and our ſeconding Satan, in his contradicting of that Deſign which hath contrived Gods glory in ſo ſweet a way.

And now Chriſtian Reader, let me intreat thee in the name and fear of God, hereafter better to underſtand and practiſe thy duty. Thy heart is better a thouſand times in godly ſorrow, than in carnal mirth (and by ſuch ſorrows it is often made better, *Eccleſ.* 7. 2, 3, 4.) But never take it to be right till it be delighting it ſelf in God. When you kneel down in prayer, labour ſo to conceive of God, and beſpeak him that he may be your delight: ſo do in Hearing and Reading: ſo do in all your Meditations of God: So do in your feaſting on the fleſh and blood of Chriſt at his Supper. Eſpecially improve the happy opportunity of the Lords Day, wherein you may wholly devote your ſelves to this work. And I adviſe Miniſters and all Chriſts Redeemed ones, that they ſpend more of thoſe daies in

Praiſe

Praiſe and Thankſgiving, eſpecially in Commemoration of the whole work of Redemption (and not of Chriſts Reſurrection alone) or elſe they will not anſwer the Inſtitution of the Lord: And that they keep it as the moſt ſolemn day of Thankſgiving, and be briefer on that day in their Confeſſions and Lamentations, and larger at other times! O that the Congregations of Chriſt through the world were ſo well informed and animated, that the main buſineſs of their ſolemn Aſſemblies on that day might be to ſound forth the high Praiſes of their Redeemer; and to begin here the Praiſes of God and the Lamb, which they muſt perfect in Heaven for ever! How ſweet a foretaſte of Heaven would be then in theſe ſolemnities! And truly, let me tell you, my Brethren of the Miniſtry, you ſhould by private Teaching and week-day Sermons ſo further the knowledge of your people, that you might not need to ſpend ſo much of the Lords Day in Sermons as the moſt godly uſe to do: but might beſtow a greater part of it in Pſalms and ſolemn Praiſes to our Redeemer. And I could wiſh that the Miniſters of *England* to that end would unanimouſly agree on ſome one Tranſlation of the *Engliſh* Pſalms in Meeter, better than that in common uſe, and if it may be, better than any yet extant (not neglecting the poetical ſweetneſs under pretence of exact Tranſlating) or at leaſt to agree on the beſt now extant: (the *London* Miniſters may do well to lead the way) leſt that bleſſed part of Gods ſolemn worſhip, ſhould be blemiſhed for want either of Reformation or Uniformity. And in my weak judgement, if Hymns and Pſalms of Praiſe were new invented, as fit for the ſtate of the Goſpel-Church and Worſhip (to laud the Redeemer come in the fleſh, as expreſly as the work of grace is now expreſs)

expreſs) as *Davids* Pſalms were fitted to the former ſtate and infancy of the Church, and more obſcure revelations of the Mediator and his Grace, it would be no ſinful humane invention or addition; nor any more want warrant, than our inventing the form and words of every Sermon that we preach, and every Prayer that we make, or any Catechiſm or Confeſſion of Faith: Nay, it may ſeem of ſo great uſefulneſs, as to be next to a Neceſſity. (Still provided that we force not any to the uſe of them that through ignorance may ſcruple it.) And if there be any convenient parcels of the Ancient Church that are fitted to this uſe, they ſhould deſervedly be preferred. I do not think I digreſs all this while from the ſcope of my Diſcourſe. For doubtleſs if Gods uſual ſolemn Worſhip on the Lords Daies were more fitted and directed to a pleaſant, delightful, praiſing way, it would do very much to frame the ſpirits of Chriſtians to Joyfulneſs, and Thankfulneſs, and Delight in God: than which there is no greater cure for their Doubtful, Penſive, ſelf-tormenting frame. O try this, Chriſtians, at the requeſt of one that is moved by God to importune you to it! God doth pitty you in your ſorrows! but he delighteth in you when you delight in him. See *Eſay* 58. 14. compared with *Zeph.* 3. 17. And if ſin interpoſe and hinder your delights, believe it, a Chearful Amendment and Obedience is that which will pleaſe God better than your ſelf-tormenting fears. Do not you like that ſervant better that will go chearfully about your work, and do it as well as he can, accounting it a Recreation, and will endeavour to mend where he hath done amiſs, than him that will at every ſtep fall a crying, *O I am ſo weak, I can do nothing as I ſhould.* An humble ſenſe of

of failings you will like; but not that your ſervant ſhould ſit ſtill and complain when he ſhould be working; nor that all your ſervice ſhould be performed with weeping, diſquietneſs and lamentations; You had rather have your ſervant humbly and modeſtly chearful, and not alway dejected, for fear of diſpleaſing you. O how many poor ſouls are over-ſeen in this! You might eaſily perceive it even by the Devils oppoſition and temptations! He will further you in your ſelf-vexations (when he can not keep you in ſecurity and preſumption) but in amending, he will hinder you with all his might. How oft have I known poor paſſionate Creatures, that would vex and rage in anger, and break out in unſeemly language, to the diſquieting of all about them; and others that would drop into other the like ſins, and when they have done, lament it, and condemn themſelves; and yet would not ſet upon a reſolute and chearful Reformation! Nay, if you do but reprove them for any ſin, they will ſooner ſay, *If I be ſo bad, God will condemn me for an Hypocrite*; and ſo lie down in diſquietneſs and diſtreſs; then they will ſay, *I ſee my ſin, and I reſolve to reſiſt it, and I pray you warn me of it, and help me to watch againſt it.* So that they would bring us to this paſs, that either we muſt let them alone with their ſins for fear of tormenting them, or elſe we muſt cauſe them to lie down in terrours. Alas, poor miſtaken ſouls! It is neither of theſe that God calls for! Will you do any thing ſave what you ſhould do? Muſt you needs be eſteemed either innocent, or Hypocrites, or ſuch as ſhall be damned? The thing that God would have, is this; That you would be glad that you ſee your fault, and thank him that ſheweth it you, and reſolvedly do your beſt to amend it, and this in faith

and

and chearful confidence in Chri[illegible]ng to his Spirit for help and victory. Will you please the Devil so far, and so far contradict the gracious way of Christ, as that you will needs either sin still, or despair? Is there not a middle between these two? to wit, chearful Amendment? remember that it is not your vexation or despair, but your Obedience and Peace that God desireth. That life is most pleasing to him, which is most safe and sweet to you.

If you say still, You cannot delight in God: I say again; *Do but acknowledge it the great work that God requireth of you, and make it your daily aim, and care, and busines, and then you will more easily and certainly attain it.* But while you know not your work, or so far mistake it, as to think it consisteth more in sorrows and fears; and never endeavour in your Duties or Meditations to raise your soul to a Delight in God, but rather to cast down your self with still poaring on your miseries, no wonder then if you be a stranger to this life of holy Delight.

By this time I find my self come up to the subject of my Book of the *Saints Rest*; Wherein having said so much to Direct and Excite you, for the attainment of these Spiritual and Heavenly Delights, I will refer you to it, for your help in that work; and add no more here, but to desire you through the course of your life to remember, That *the true Love of God in Christ, and Delight in him, and Thankfull, Chearfull Obedience to him, is the great work of a Christian, which God is best pleased with, and which the blessed Angels and Saints shall be exercised in for ever.*

And O thou the Blessed God of Love, the Father of Mercy, the Prince of Peace, the Spirit of Consolation, compose the Disquieted spirits of thy People, and the tumultuous,

tumultuous, distracted state of thy Churches; and pardon our Rashness, Contentions, and Blood guiltiness, and give us not up to the state of the wicked, who are like the raging Sea, and to whom there is no Peace! Lay thy command on our winds and waves, before thy shipwrackt vessel perish: And rebuke that evil spirit whose name is Legion, which hath possessed so great a part of thine Inheritance: Send forth the spirit of Judgement and Meekness into thy Churches, and save us from our Pride and Ignorance with their effects: And bring our feet into the way of Peace, which hitherto we have not known. O close all thy people speedily in loving consultations, and earnest enquiries after Peace. Let them return from their Corruptions, Contentions and Divisions, and joyntly seek thee, asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward: saying, Come, let us joyn our selves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant that shall not be forgotten: Blast all opposing Policies and Powers: Say to these Dead and Dry bones, Live. And out of these Ruines do thou yet erect a City of Righteousness, where thy People may dwell together in peaceable habitations; and in the midst thereof, A Temple to thy Holiness: Let the Materials of it be Verity and Purity: Let the Redeemer be its Foundation: Let Love and Peace cement it into Unity: Let thy Laver and Covenant be the Doors; and Holiness to the Lord be engraved thereon; that buyers and sellers may be cast out, and the common and unclean may know their Place; and let no desolating abomination be there set up: But let thy People all in one Name, in one Faith, with one mind, and one soul, attend to thine Instructions, and wait for thy Laws, and submit unto thine Order, and rejoyce in thy Salvation: that the troubled spirits may be there exhilerated, the dark

enlightned,

enlightned, and all may offer thee the ſacrifice of Praiſe (without diſaffections, diſcords or diviſions:) that ſo thy People may be thy Delight, and thou mayeſt be the chiefeſt Delight of thy People; and they may pleaſe thee through him that hath perfectly pleaſed thee. Or if our expectations of this Happineſs on earth be too high, yet give us ſo much as may enlighten our eyes, and heal thoſe corruptions which eſtrange us from thee, and may propagate thy Truth, encreaſe thy Church, and honour thy Holineſs, and may quicken our deſires, and ſtrengthen us in our way, and be a foretaſte to us of the Everlaſting Reſt.

FINIS.

Reader,

THat I may remove what was offenſive by reaſon of their miſconſtruction, who either read my lines with uncharitable ſuſpition, or in the dark, where the plaineſt Engliſh is undiſcernable; I have left out in this Impreſſion all thoſe paſſages about perſeverance, which were offenſive, and all other that any man hath (to me) excepted againſt, and therefore I may well ſpare the Apology before annexed. Though I diſown not hereby the plain truths before expreſſed, yet I have reaſon for this alteration, becauſe I write for thy good, and therefore may well lay by that which occaſioneth thy hurt, how innocent ſoever; Though I will not *Deny* the ſmalleſt truth to avoid offence, or hurt, nor forſake it in my *Mind*; yet will I forbear divulging it; for that is but *uſing* it: And it was not made to be uſed for mens hurt; and even the accidental hurt muſt, as far as may be, be avoided. 2. I may poſſibly more ſeaſonably deliver my thoughts in ſo many, and ſuch words as may be leſs liable to miſunderſtanding, than ſuch brief paſſages on the by. 3. The ſame things are plainly delivered already in many writings: as *Doctrinally* in the Synod of *Dort*, and Practically improved (among many others) by that moſt judicious, holy, powerful, ſucceſsful Preacher, Mr. *William Fenner*, in divers of his (though Poſthumous imperfect, yet) excellent Works.

Luke 2. 14. Glory to God in the Higheſt, on earth Peace, good will towards men.

Eccleſ. 12. 12, 13, 24. Of making many Books there is no end: and much ſtudy is a wearineſs to the fleſh. Let us hear the Concluſion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his Commandments: for this is the whole [Duty] of man, &c. For God ſhall bring every work into judgement, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.